ISSN 2278-1269

SHEERAZA

A quarterly journal of culture and literature

Volume-IX No. 2 Apr-Jun, 2013

Jammu and Kashmir
Academy of Art, Culture and Languages

SHEERAZA

(English)

A quarterly journal of culture and literature

Volume-IX No.2 Apr-Jun, 2013

Editor-in-Chief
Khalid Bashir Ahmad

Editor
Abid Ahmad

Jammu and Kashmir
Academy of Art, Culture and Languages

Mailing address:

Editor, Sheeraza English
J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages
Lal Mandi-1, Srinagar
E-mail: mabidahmad@gmail.com

Subscription Rate:

Rs. 15.00 (Per issue)
Ra. 60.00 (Annual)

Published By:

J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages

Designing and Composing at:

3d DESIGNING
Feroz Ahmad
Room No.8, Central Market,
Abi-Guzar, Srinagar Lal Chwok-190001

CONTENTS

Editorial

Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam continue to be our beaconlights. They have been the most creative influences on the formation of our cultural ethos. This issue of Sheeraza carries two write-ups on them by two scholars of eminence - Prof G R Malik and Prof Majrooh Rashid.

Prof Malik, in his paper, discusses how the duo springs from our Collective Unconscious, which is deeply religious and religious in true sense of the term.

Prof Majrooh, in his brief write-up, has discussed a hitherto unexplored area in Shaikh al-Alam Studies, that is, his poetic aesthetics. The topic needs further discussion to identify the multi-dimensional aesthetics of Shaikh al-Alam's poetry.

Prof Shashi Pathania, in her paper, has looked at the wisdom the Dogri folklore possesses. She has shown how folklore, despite the advancement in scientific knowledge, is still indispensable.

Dr Lalit Gupta, in his paper, has tried to identify the newest set of challenges the regional languages like Dogri are facing in the wake of globalization and media boom.

Sati as a practice is banned but there are some historical characters who have assumed the status of the deities over the centuries. Dr Mrinaliny Attrey, in her paper, has identified some such deities.

Dr Gulzar Ahmad Rather, in his paper, has discussed the

contribution of the poet Abdul Ahad Nazim.

Snow is one of the identification-marks of Kashmir. What are the practices of entertainment related to snow and winter is what Manoj Sheeri discusses in his paper.

Asma Shaw, in her paper, has discussed the classic *Conference of Birds* as a repository of universal human values.

Short stories section carries translations of two Dogri short stories and two original stories by budding writers.

Poetry section is equally rich having translation from both classical and contemporary poetry, besides some original poems.

Feedback of the esteemed readers, as usual, is solicited.

KASHMIR'S RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam

Prof G R Malik

To develop an appropriate and comprehensive definition of Kashmir's religious consciousness, the achievement of Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam will have to be seen in combination. They are unquestionably the most outstanding archetypal figures in our culture, the two most popular icons. We have had other distinguished religious luminaries in our history who have exercised tremendous influence on our culture and thinking but no one quite shares the popularity with Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam. The reason for this is that both of them spring from our Collective Unconscious, our peculiar national psyche, and have now become its integral parts. This Collective psyche of ours is deeply religious and religious in the true sense of the term.

To understand this we will have to bear in mind the all-important distinction between two concepts of religion: religion as inner purification and spiritual development and religion as mere ritual and formalism. The one emphasizes the esoteric dimension of religion while the other is contented with the observance of exoteric formalities. Ideally the two dimensions of religion - the esoteric and the

exoteric - should be organically related to each other as soul and body; the one lending life, zest, passion, and meaning to the other. But in the history of religion we generally witness a split between the two which renders formalism not merely meaningless but extremely dangerous.

It was not so much the form as the essence of religion to which both Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam were wedded. Their religious vision is therefore essentially similar although one of them was a Trika Shaivist Yogini and the other a Muslim by faith. In the monistic and Trika Shaivist non-dualistic theistic vision rituals and formalities were irrelevant; the ideal was to establish a deep communion between man and the Supreme Reality, Shiva, which was seen as 'Light' which is the literal meaning of the word Shiva. *Gayatri*, the hymn common to the four *Vedas* also adores 'light' and the source from which it emanates. Light is the most common image in which God has been envisioned in prominent religious traditions. Buddha means 'the enlightened one' and Edwin Arnold has fittingly titled his verse biography of Buddha as *'The Light of Asia'*. Zoroaster viewed God - the embodiment of all good as *Shidh* (light) and the symbol of the forces of evil as Tar (darkness). The nearest definition of God in the Quran occurs in a verse of Surah *al-Nur (The Light)*:

> *Allah is the light of heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as if there were a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass and the glass like unto a shining star. (The lamp) is kindled by a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil will well-nigh glow forth although no fire touched it. Light upon light; Allah guides whomsoever He wills to His light and Allah sets forth similitudes and Allah is the knower of all things. (24:35)*

As the verse suggests this light cannot be limited to any confines of the East and the West. Likewise true religion does not lie in formalities. As the Quran most eloquently puts it:

> *Virtue does not lie in the fact that you turn your faces towards the East and the West. On the other hand virtue is that a man believes in Allah and in the Last Day and in the angels and the Books and the Prophets and gives his wealth away for His love to the kinsfolk, the orphans, the indigent, the wayfarers and to those who ask in need and to free necks (from burdens of slavery and debt). And virtue lies in him who is steadfast in offering the prayers and in paying zakah. And it resides in those who fulfil the promises which they make and exhibit self-discipline and patience in adversity and pain and in times of tribulation and stress. These indeed are the truthful and these indeed are the God- Conscious. (2-177).*

Lal Ded, quite in accord with Trika Shaivism, clings to the essence of religion and denounces all formalities including idol-worship, animal sacrifice and *tirath-yatra* (pilgrimage). She taught Siddha Shrikantha (Siddha Mol) that it is fruitless to wash your body when the soul within is unclean. The whole emphasis in her poetry falls on inner purification and spiritual growth:

> *My guru gave me one single precept:*
> *"Withdraw from without to the inner self."*
> *That precept became my being, my song*
> *And I took to roaming and dancing naked.*

The Ultimate Reality can also be reached by plumbing one's inner depths as God resides within man himself:

> *At last I found the Pundit in my own home*

The world that lies before us and also the human

body are not an illusion to be despised. 'Sahaz' - the One True Self - abides in all and all is therefore sacred:

I looked for the Moon within myself

Searching like to like in forms:

Thou art this and this and that and that

Then what is this shadow-play of forms?

One only has to guard oneself against being sucked up by the appearance at the cost of the Reality.

Hazrat Shaikh al-Alam's spiritual development occurred in distinct stages. In the first stage we see him totally absorbed in an all-consuming passion for inner purification and for gaining control over carnal self. For twelve years he withdrew himself from society into the seclusion of a cave, living a life of meditation, penance and self-denial. Keeping in view his later life this phase can be described as the phase of self-discovery, spiritual cleansing and inner growth. So whole-heartedly was he devoted to self-realization that no pleading, even that of his mother, could prevail on him to renounce his ascetic mode of life. The mother soulfully pleads:

My Nunda, caves are infested with rats and scorpions,

And lions and jackals may assail you there;

My Nunda, today you have left the shelter of my bosom;

Lice and fleas may afflict you now.

To this his gentle but firm answer is:

Mother, this cave I take as a palatial mansion,

These rags my silken wear;

With rats I'll play as with royal birds

And this life I shall take as a fleeting instant.

But once the Shaikh was convinced of having achieved the objective of self-purification, he voluntarily came out of the life of retirement with the purpose of communicating his inner vision to others and living life in accordance with the demands of that vision. Accordingly he began to preach his simple doctrines of sincerity, single-minded devotion to spiritual purification and unworldly worldliness. The form of the worship, he now pleads, may be a mere deception unless it is informed by a sincere desire for the pleasure of God:

I rowed my boat without an oar,
Suppressed impulse, greed and desire,
With a simple heart sought for the Friend,
It was then alone that I knew my soul.

Hasan Shah Koihami and several other Kashmiri historians have called Lal Ded Rabia-e Thani (the second Rabia-e Basariah), the great female mystic of medieval Islam who would roam the streets of Basarah and Baghdad with a bowl of water in one hand and a pot of fire in the other. When asked why she did so, she replied that with water she would extinguish the hell-fires and with fire, burn the paradise so that people worship Allah for His sake alone. Here is Hazrat Shaikh al-Alam on the same subject:

Who shall turn to Thee selflessly?
Who shall have that breadth of heart?
For the lure of Heaven and fear of Hell
O God, they worship Thee.

Thus the emphasis here, as in Lal Ded, falls on the purity of soul, and life and its duties are also to be approached from this point of view. The world and its responsibilities are not

to be shunned but even as one does one's duties, the soul is to be safeguarded from being devoured by material preoccupations. In place of escape, the Shaikh now advances the ideal of 'unworldly worldliness':

In the jungles jackals and monkeys live

And the rats inhabit the caves:

Those who remove the inner dirt five times a day

Doing duties in their families, they are the chosen ones.

It is to be remarked that even though commitment to life and its duties is affirmed here, the emphasis is on remaining ever alert to remove the inner dirt. This is the end of ends for religion and religious worship.

Both Lal Ded and Shaikh al-Alam communicate their vision through poetry. In Lal's case the right verb to be used is 'embody' and not 'communicate' because, unlike Shaikh al- Alam, she is unmindful of a social role. As poets the two reach out to us, scaling the distance of several centuries. This is the case only with the greatest poets like Sophocles, Kalidas, Rumi, Sadi, Hafiz, Dante, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Ghalib and Goethe. Why is it that some poets achieve universality while others do no live beyond their day? History tells us that hundreds of plays, along with details of their staging and performance, were made available to Aristotle when he sat down to write the Poetics. Why is it that only a few plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes have survived? What happened to the remaining hundreds of plays? The contemporaries of poets named above are no longer known although in their own day they may have been very popular. This is because the great creative artist has an uncanny access to the

Universal Reality which transcends the limits of time and space. He seizes the Universal in the particular and the timeless in the temporal. In this he is different from the historian and the chronicler or the modern media person. *A Tale of Two Cities* will live even as the historical works about the French Revolution will date and cease to live. Shakespeare's Hamlet, unlike history's Hamlet, will continue to yield new meanings and interpretations and Hafiz and Ghalib will never date. That is why Aristotle said that poetry is more universal than history. Lal and Shaikh al-Alam had access to the Universal and the Timeless because of their mystical vision. Such a vision transcends not only all barriers of time and space but also those of caste, creed and consciously held beliefs.

(The author is a former professor of English, University of Kashmir.)

THE POETIC ART OF SHAIKH AL-ALAM

Prof Majrooh Rashid

It is always uncomfortable for me to write on the life as well as the poetry attributed to Shaikh al-Alam. There are two main reasons for that:

a) The life and works of the great saint are to great extent shrouded in mystery.

(b) It is very difficult to write something original with regard to the poetic craft and skills of the saint-poet as there is hardly any artistic facet that has not been dealt with brilliantly by the connoisseurs of Kashmiri poetry right from Abdul Ahad Azad, J L Koul, Autar Krishan Rehbar, Rehman Rahi and Mohammad Yousuf Taing upto G N Gowhar, Marghoob Banihali, Rashid Nazki, Shafi Shauq and G.M. Shad.

Notwithstanding this fact, a large mass of pseudo-critical writings and statements have been continuously accumulating on the literary scene of the Kashmiri language. While sifting through the mass of these writings, I have always felt that things have been repeated in brazenly dishonest style and that one does not come across even a single reference to the sources whom the scholars have not only benefited from but have by and large upheld

their points of view and used their critical tools. Having said that, the issue remains: what to write, and how to write something different with regard to the poetry of the Shaikh? Though, it is very difficult to write something original but it is a bitter constraint to pen some sentences as I am looking after a department of which Shaikh al-Aalam is an essential pillar and where brilliant and exhaustive critical work has been carried out in the seventies and eighties of the last century.

Anyway I am trying to look at the poetry of Shaikh al-Aalam from a different angle i.e., his poetic aesthetics. Lal Ded and the Shaikh are reckoned as the makers of Kashmiri poetry and have been evaluated by those critical and aesthetic standards as have been imbibed from the Persio-Arabic and Western poetics. It does not mean that this critical process has not been just and genuine. In fact, it has helped the critics to appreciate the poetic beauty of these poets. When Shaikh wrote, a poetics of high standard had been in vogue in Kashmir which helped shape the poetic personality of the saint-poet. The way Persian poetics as well as aesthetics had an everlasting impact on Kashmiri poetry, the same way Kashmiri aesthetics in Shaikh's time had wittingly or unwittingly benefited from the Sanskrit poetics. Right from the prosody of the *shruks* that has been brilliantly deliberated upon by Professor Rehman Rahi, down to the nature of cannons of this poetry, the import of Sanskrit literary principles is all too evident. How could Kashmiri poetry escape from the glory of Sanskrit literary tradition that produced great poetry as well as excellent literary criticism. Until Shaikh al-Aalam arrived on the literary scene of the valley of Kashmir, Sanskrit poetics was there in the bones and blood of

Kashmir.

Now let us have a cursory look at the main components of the poetics that I refer to as Sanskrit poetics. So far as Anandavardhana and Mammata are concerned, they are mainly concerned with the dhvani-the theory of suggestion. Both of them are, conscious of the elements of Rasa and its significance in poetry but in their theories they are emphatic about dhvani. Anandavardhana, dealing with dhvani declared that great poetry or suggestive poetry is endowed with evocative power……the very soul of poetry. Explaining dhvani, he said that it is three-fold, the first being an idea which he called vastudhvani, second a figure of speech which he named alamkardhvani and the third and the last one is a symbol or a suggestion which is capable of evoking an emotion in the reader's mind.

For him the best poetry is uttamakaya or dhvani kavya wherein suggested sense prevails on the apparent sense or meaning. The formidable Sanskrit aesthetician Abinavagupta while interpreting the historic Dhvanloka in his Lochna, emphatically explained that Rasa dhvani is of highest significance for Anandvardhana. He not only propounded dhvani theory but also corrected the taste of the reader when he gave a new meaning to Rasa. According to most of the historians of Sanskrit poetics, Rasa was lost in the maze of rhetorical categories devised by poeticians including Dandin and Bramha and a new life was infused in the Rasa theory only when it became an integral part of dhvani.

As compared to Anandvardhana, Mummata seems to be deliberately silent on the mention of dhvani and Rasa in the poetic theory but it does not mean that he rejected the

theories. He has rather very emphatically appreciated them and took serious note of them without clearly referring to these aesthetic elements. Mummata makes a well-devised classification of poetry and divides poetic art in three distinct categories. The most beautiful piece of poetry for him is a poem wherein suggested or symbolic sense is more fascinating than the apparent meaning. He calls it uttama kavya which is in tune with the dhvani kavya of Ananandhavardhana. He states that a poem in which the symbolic content is less attractive than the expressed thought is a madhyama kavya which is closer to Anandavardhana's gunibhutavyanga. A poem decorated with guna and alamkaras devoid of any symbolic significance is adhamakavya which again is in a way in conformity with the citrakavya of Ananddavardhana.

Without going into the details of the theories referred to above we are in a position to say that Sanskrit poetics is not distant from the Western poetics and that is not possible too as all arts basically deal with universal human experiences. So when art deals with the same stuff how can their impact and influence be different.

Looking at the poetry of Shaikh al-Aalam purely from the point of view of Sanskrit poetics, one feels that we are in a position to evaluate it more comprehensively and we can divide the poetry of the Shaikh into the categories that have been devised by Anandavardhana and Mummata. We can quote verses that are suggestive in nature and whose suggestivity evokes a symbolic meaning and gives some impersonal pleasure. We can spot poems that are symbolically less striking and fascinating than the apparent sense. And lastly we can come across poetic compositions as are products of the mere usage of the figures of speech,

devoid of any distinct symbolic sense. Confronting the poetry of the great mystic we experience the universality of human emotion as well as its variegated and fascinating ways of manifestation. The impact of the theory formulated by Bharata with regard to dramatic art is also visible in the poetry of the Shaikh. Like Greek aestheticians and critics, Indian literary experts also believed that drama was a form of poetry - visual poetry. For Bharata, dramatic text was equally significant along with the dramatic gesticulation (natyartha). Analyzing the poetry of Shaikh al-Aalam we notice images that are related to the arts of stage and drama and dance and there are many references in Shaikh's poetry to words and terms like raang and magun that are connected to these distinct arts.

(The author teaches Kashmiri in the Kashmir University, Srinagar.)

DOGRA CULTURE
Knowledge and Beliefs

Prof Shashi Pathania

Every society has its own particular culture or socio-cultural system consisting of language, ideas, customs, taboos, codes, works of art, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, beliefs etc. and Dogra culture is no exception. It is very interesting to note that a good number of beliefs, concerning every sphere of life, is available in Dogra folk-lore too. These beliefs denote a practical form of knowledge regarding society, interpersonal relationship, parenting, agriculture, business, trade, service, weather, seasons, health, medicine and so on. In the present paper an attempt has been made to discuss the knowledge depicted in folk-beliefs prevalent in Dogra society. To make the study more focused, only the beliefs related to agriculture and health have been discussed here.

The social and cultural life to a great extent depends upon the economic condition of the people. Economically, this land is a land of agriculturists, soldiers and traders. The economy of the region was based mainly on agriculture. Geographical conditions of the region play an important role for agriculture. The Dogra region is situated in lower Himalayan ranges and has three belts- hilly, plain and rocky terrain. The people mostly depend on rain and oxen for cultivation. These two factors play an important role in this

region. Knowledge and beliefs regarding agriculture, yield, rain and oxen are prevalent among the folk of this region. Because of the uncertainty of the yield of crops, the folk make predictions, on the basis of experience, the prospects of good crop or famine. Their assumptions are mainly based on rain, direction of wind etc.

Ancient people tried to understand the weather by observing natural elements around them such as direction of the wind, colour and thickness of clouds and made guesses about the future of crops. Such guesses sometimes came true, but at times proved wrong. However, such beliefs in the Dogra oral tradition confirms the use of them as source of knowledge, and these serve as a ready hand-book of information and knowledge even now in the rural areas. The following sayings and proverbs by Dogras show their knowledge and beliefs regarding land, wind, rain, crop etc.

For cultivation, land is the base and the yield depends on the fertility of land. To start the process of farming, one has to choose a fertile land and the question arises how to test it. In absence of any scientific technique for testing the land for cultivation, the people evolved their own technique by observing the kind and growth of grass. It is thought that if there is Bermuda grass then it is believed that crop will be good. If it has Papyrus Sedge then crop will be weak and if land is barren and stony, the labour will bear no fruit. This belief has been illustrated in the following saying:-

Jis Paili Khabbal, Utthai Fasal Abbal , Jis Paili Deela,
Utthai Fasal Peela, Jis Paili Ror, Utthai Fasal Chaur

(The land where there is Bermuda grass, the crop will surely be excellent there

The land where there is Papyrus Sedge, crop

will be pale and weak

If the land is stony, means no yield).

The technology used in agriculture in Duggar Pradesh is not very advanced. Even today the people in villages adhere more to traditional knowledge and means of farming. Since the main operations of farming are ploughing, sowing, irrigating, harvesting etc., we shall consider all. For ploughing, the first and foremost requirement is oxen. Even now it is almost impossible for folk to plough without oxen in the hilly region. Every ox is not good in ploughing. So it is very essential to identify the right one. There are sayings that provide the knowledge for selection of ox on the basis of physical characteristics. Regarding the characteristics of a good ox, the following saying provides the folk local knowledge like in a manual:

Muttha sing te gittha kyaari, khucchen uppar chumbh nuhari

Gora-Maila laina taari

(The ox having horns as long as fist and neck of hand-span,

Tail, touching ankles, white or of earthy colour must be chosen).

More traditional knowledge for testing the ox may be known from the following saying:

Daand gaahiyai, ghora bahiyai

(Ox must be tested by trying in ploughing and horse by riding).

Most of the region being hilly and stony, people depend on rain for irrigation. Again people have their own ways to know the commencement of rain. They make predictions by observing winds, clouds, interpreting the

indications provided by lightening and calculating the position of stars, date, month etc. People observe the density of clouds and direction of air and give their judgment. In the following saying prediction regarding the weather is very much clear. A man makes his observation on the basis of the colour of clouds and direction of the air and tells his wife that clouds are of the colour of partridge's wings and eastern wind is blowing so it will surely rain:

Tittar phangi baddali chalai purai di hava

Bhatta akhai sun Bhattani andar manja daah

(Clouds like the colour of partridge's wings, eastern wind is blowing

Husband (Bhatta) says to wife (Bhattani), make bed inside).

Similarly, in another saying observation is based on lightening:

Dakkhan lagai bijali, chalai purav di hava

Bhatta akhai sun Bhattani andar manja daah

(Lightening in the south, eastern wind is blowing

Husband (Bhatta) says to wife (Bhattani), make bed inside).

They also make prediction whether it will rain or not, and if it does, whether the rain will be good or bad for the crop. According to some beliefs as depicted in sayings, people can calculate the future of crop according to the date, nakshatra, month etc. For example, finding a particular period in a particular month or months enables them to predict that there will be good crop throughout the year. In this regard people say:

Aunde singhen sir sijjai janden sijjai pittha

Bhatta akhai Bhattani baaranmaah sabikkha

(If it rains during the last six days of Shravana and first six days of Bhadrapad, It is a kind of assurance of the prosperity throughout the year).

Similarly, if crop is sown in the seventh month of Hindu calendar and it rains in eighth month of Hindu calendar, it is believed that crop will be good. The following saying illustrates folk's view:

Barai Magher daanen da dher

(If it rains in the eighth month of Hindu calendar, yield will be good).

On the contrary if it rains in the seventh month of Hindu calendar, that is interpreted as an indication of famine. People's concern is very much apparent in this saying :

Kattak barai ik rutti daun janen

(If it rains in the seventh month of Hindu calendar, yield will be half).

Sowing is one of the most important operations in farming. Some traditional knowledge regarding sowing is also carried to the present age through folk beliefs. The knowledge regarding the space between the rows of specific crop has been stored in the following saying:

Diddha tuaaki kaungni, gajjo-gajja kapaah

Leph bukkala mariyai Makken bicchen ja

In this saying it is suggested that to get good yield, pigeon-pea must be sown at the distance of as much as a frog's one-and half jump. One yard's space must be left between the rows of cotton- plants and distance between the rows of maize plants should be at least this much that one could move through with quilt wrapping around.

The prevailing beliefs also suggest as to which crop

can get good yield in a particular season. For instance, in the following saying it is said that good yield from melons can be achieved if it is sown in second or third month of Hindu calendar. People say:

Jeth-Haar Kakkari, Akka, Khota, Bakkari

(Melon, swallow-wort plant, donkey and goat flourish during the months of Jeth & Asharh).

As far as threshing is concerned, the following saying possesses the knowledge which is true as it is not easy to thresh moist ears of grains.

Ik Jau sille uppara jotar dhille

(On one hand barley-ears are moist and another hassle is that oxen are lazy and slow).

Every society has beliefs concerning health and medicines and Dogra society is no exception. They use traditional knowledge to maintain health and curing techniques. Here only health concerning folk-beliefs are discussed. The following saying illustrates awareness in the folk about the importance of health. Whereas the English say, 'health is wealth' the Dogra folk rates health very high in comparison to wealth as it says that it is universe.

Jinda ai taan jahan ai

(If body is free from ailment only then this universe is of any importance).

It is well acknowledged that good health is the source of all happiness. Even when one possesses much wealth, if his/her health is not good, he/she cannot enjoy peace of mind. To make sure whether one possesses a healthy body or not, the following saying suggests that if feet are warm, belly is soft, head is cool that means person is healthy and hence no need to see the physician.

Pair garam, pet naram, sir thanda

Aavai vaid taan maro danda

Now consider the question what is necessary for good health?

The answers will be pure air, clean water, good food, exercise and proper rest. Yes, this is all what the indigenous beliefs teach us. This belief indicates that one should drink filtered water because impure water causes many diseases. The following saying reveals the necessity to purify the water:-

Pani peechai puniyai, guru banachai chuniai

(Water must be filtered before drinking, Guru must be selected).

Food is fuel for body. It is said that health condition mainly depends on what one eats and how many times eats. Today scientific research has confirmed that the most of the leading causes of diseases are preventable and good health can be gained by improving our lifestyle. Many studies have emphasized the importance of breakfast. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. It boosts our energy. The following saying is based on the wisdom of indigenous folk that we can stay healthy by taking breakfast.

Badale di nahari, na dukh na bamari

(A breakfast in the morning keeps the pain and
disease away).

Mention of balanced diet in the sayings reflects the knowledge of indigenous people. The following saying reveals that a healthy diet gives our body the right amount of energy, enough raw material and all that we need to stay healthy. Good nutrition also provides antioxidants that help keep us feeling young, looking great, and perhaps even

disease-free.:

Marad te ghora, khurak thahondi ravai taan kaden buddhe nein honde.

(Man and horse never become old if they get healthy diet).

Avoidance of indigestion is essential for good health and so folk-beliefs instruct to take rest after meals for good digestion. The insight of the folk shows power of their observation and social concerns. One saying can be illustrated here:-

Khaiyai sei jaana, mariyai nassi jaana

(Sleep after meals, run away after beating).

Sleep is also essential for an individual's health and well being. Sleep disorder can have profound effect on the health of a person. So the following saying warns people that if someone does not have sleep till the third quarter of night that means the person is suffering from some ailment, though it may be a sleep disorder. Saying is

Paihale paihar te har koi jaagai, dooai jaagai bhogi
Triye paihar koi rogi jaagai, chauthai jaagai jogi

Thus, it seems clear that the indigenous knowledge of Dogra folk about agriculture and health plays a significant role in their day-to-day life . Even now, the life of Dogras is guided by beliefs and these beliefs serve as a ready hand-book of knowledge. These beliefs are good channels of communicating the worldview of Dogra society and culture. This indigenous knowledge can be useful and helpful in many ways for advancement of human knowledge.

(The author teaches Dogri in the Jammu University).

DOGRI

Challenges of the Future

Dr Lalit Gupta

Language has emerged as one of the significant markers of cultural identity in fascinating multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual mosaic of races and communities living in three regions of Jammu and Kashmir.

In this context Dogri's inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of Indian Constitution in the year 2003 was certainly a significant cultural development in the State. Dogri's official recognition as one of the national languages, which came after almost half a century of heroic struggle waged by writers, poets and litterateurs, while assuaging the sentiments of communities collectively labeled as Dogras, also acknowledged historical roots of their distinct sub-identity in the overall national context.

The landmark status of being second major language of Jammu and Kashmir was but a natural corollary for the language which from the tumultuous middle-ages to the mid-20th century has flourished as the mother tongue of natives in ancient Dharva Abhisar and parts of Trigarta that today roughly constitute Jammu region and contiguous areas in parts of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab such as Kangra, Chamba, Nurpur, Mukerian, Hoshiarpur, Pathankot and Shakargah and Sialkot in Pakistan.

Invaders came and went; rulers were appointed and overthrown; the local dynasties spent much time and energy in consolidating and enlarging borders but this language with its own script Takri, which locals liked to speak, held strong. Then came the waves of cultural developments: Punjabi influence increased in post-1900 administration. Dogri, which though briefly, had displaced Persian as official language of modern state of Jammu and Kashmir, was made to make way for Urdu.

During the last sixty years the crusaders of Dogri not only proved Greirson's erroneous label for the language a 'dialect of Punjabi' as utterly unfounded but also engineered its resurrection as a modern language by creating a large corpus of quality literature.

This new literature in Dogri being the aesthetic expression of native value system along with present day changes and challenges in the lifestyle of Dogras also showcases inherent tenacity and capacity of the language to evolve so as to express for its native speakers the new sensibilities that have emerged as defining markers of our times.

In this age of globalization and homogenization, the whirlwind developments brought about by technological and media revolution are having a cascading effect upon the overall socio-cultural scenario in which among other things the regional languages have been or are being coercively replaced or marginalized by the language of a dominant culture in the world.

To take stock of the ground reality of Dogri as a modern language in present times, the annual conference organized by J&K Cultural Academy recently in Jammu, admirably succeeded in pinpointing challenges and

opportunities in reference to the present status of the mother tongue.

Young Generation and Mother tongue

Interestingly underneath the euphoria for achievements of local cultural renaissance, the picture on ground presents a contrast. 'The younger generations-exposed to the new world of virtual reality dished out through many forms of media-are going away from the mother tongue. They no more think in native language, but being tutored in languages like Hindi, English, are fast treading on the path of mono-culture.

The city of Jammu has traditionally been a socio-cultural and political hub of the Duggar. In fact Jammu city being the regional metropolis is in many ways similar to what cosmopolitan Mumbai is to Maharashtra: One is big while the other is small.

Despite the fact that Gujratis, Sindhis, Parsis, Telugus, Tamils, Bengalis, Bhojpuris, Punjabis, Rajasthanis and others outnumber Marathis today in Mumbai, their language Marathi has not suffered on any account. Whereas every household speaks Marathi, the same cannot be said about Dogra houses in Jammu today.

In the city of Jammu, which is also home to Punjabis, Mirpuris, Gujjars, Paharis, Bhadarwahis, Kishtwaris and Kashmiris alongwith now sizable number of skilled laborers from Bihar and parts of Uttar Pradesh, there is a growing tendency in Dogri homes to shun mother tongue in favor of Hindi and English.

Not only the kids being brought up in urban centers are hardly speaking Dogri but there is growing tendency amongst the family elders in villages to talk to their wards in

Hinidized Dogri with smattering of distorted English words. One has only to imagine the negative impact upon mother tongue when this urban tendency is also followed in rural pockets, where already 'English Academies' are doing roaring business.

Thus growing distance of children from their mother tongue has emerged as major challenge for the future of the language and the traditional knowledge it encompasses as each language is a uniquely structured world of thought, with its own associations, metaphors, ways of thinking, vocabulary, sound system and grammar - all working together in a marvelous architectural structure which is so fragile that it could easily be lost forever.

Neglect of Mother Tongue in School Curriculum

Though during 1950's, under the Naya Kashmir aspirations, Kashmiri was introduced as a subject of study as well as medium of instruction but soon it was replaced by Urdu.

Dogri which was agreed by government to be introduced in schools, in fact started from the very top of the academic ladder and was introduced in University of Jammu.

It was due to relentless efforts of Dogri Sanstha that recently there has been some success in introducing Dogri as one of the subjects in few schools and colleges. But general administrative apathy and lack of language teachers is proving a great deterrent for desiring students to opt for Dogri as a subject.

In this age of ascendency of English and Hindi in public sphere where English learning to whatever degree can be empowering, there are hardly any takers for Dogri

despite the proven fact that children who start studies in mother tongue fare much better in terms of intellectual growth than their counterparts who begin learning through the medium of English or any other non-native language.

Lack of Visibility in Public Sphere

Like in Punjab, Tamil Nadu or Bengal, where one is sure to encounter all public signage in local languages, no such visibility of Dogri language is seen in public spaces. Similarly, other than Dogri writers and scholars and organizations, Dogri is hardly being put to use in public correspondence, invitation cards, public notices, posters, banners etc.

Throughout the twentieth century, radio, television and the print media have immensely furthered the cause of regional languages, but sadly barring Radio, Dogri did not gain much from various forms of mass media. All India Radio Jammu, with a variety of popular programs, music and drama segments, not only catered to the colloquial Dogra communities settled in far flung areas of the region but also greatly helped in revamping the linguistic identity through broadcasting programmes based on multifaceted cultural heritage.

Not undermining the pivotal contribution and continuing need for quality literature in the development of Dogri, popular publications in everyday life have their own importance. In this reference it is an alarming fact that other than literary and academic journals like Dogri Sanstha's 'Nami Chetna', J&K Cultural Academy's 'Sheeraja' and Jammu University's Post Graduate Department's 'Dogri Shodh', only one daily newspaper and one weekly is being published; that too having minimum readership. This near absence of popular publication in Dogri is also a major

reason behind language's almost total lack of visibility in public life and sphere.

Same is true for local TV channels which are yet to take initiative in giving adequate time slot to programs in Dogri. The only exception being the Doordarshan Kendra Jammu and the meager share of programs in Dogri telecast from Kashir channel. But this miniscule production of TV serials in Dogri by luring most of the local actors, have adversely affected the popular media of theatre in general and Dogri Theater in particular.

Though recently there have been efforts to make films in Dogri, but sadly the three films released on big screen in last three years have not even recovered their production cost. Due to near absence of cinemas in major district headquarters, the looming specter of eminent financial loss is a major challenge for the future of Dogri cinema.

The Dogri songs are also missing from the bulk of trendy music played in public transport plying in Jammu region. Instead it is Punjabi pop albums and Bollywood songs that are generally played.

Though the creative writers and academicians are constantly adding on to the body of the printed books in Dogri but sadly there are hardly any readers. Another problem that is plaguing the overall publications in Dogri is the lack of standardization of Dogri script. This infirmity is not only affecting the Dogri in print, but also proving to be a major hindrance in creating the much needed Unicode for writing and translating Dogri on computers and the internet.

Dogri's new official position which now entitles the language's representation on the Official Languages Commission, and makes obligatory for the Government of India to take measures for the development of the language, such that it grows rapidly in richness and becomes effective means of communicating modern knowledge, has certainly opened up new vistas for the development of the language.

The ongoing schemes of J&K Cultural Academy, Sahitya Akademi, Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, are playing very important role mainly in reference to literary and academic expressions of Dogri language in print.

When the world is seeing revival movements of languages, tribes and communities in the remotest corners of the globe which are fighting for the right to converse as their ancestors did, the activists of Dogri also need to devise new strategies for restoring the social prestige of the language by elevating it to the status necessary for full civic participation and economic advancement.

But first of all downward decline of the language due to community's own lack of pride in its heritage, needs to be reversed with help of plethora of opportunities in this age of new media.

Alongwith immediate standardization of script for writing in Dogri and its publications, the other steps needed in reference to Dogri literature include large number of quality translations from Dogri to other languages and vice versa, reframing of courses and syllabi, creating of school text books in Dogri for science and social sciences subjects and knowledge literature.

In this digital age it is important to use all forms of media and social media to popularize the language especially in the entertainment sector. Some of the steps could be the launching of a dedicated Dogri TV channel, producing and marketing popular Dogri films, music albums and drama audio and video CD's and DVDs, launching special sites of Dogri music on internet, digital and online editions of Dogri books, newspapers, weeklies, also portals for on-line purchase of Dogri books, music and video CD's and DVD's, holding of Jammu Mela through public participation, exclusive Dogri drama and music competitions by region's civic bodies etc.

(The author teaches in the Institute of Music and Fine Arts, Jammu.)

SATI DEITIES OF JAMMU

A Study

Dr Mrinalini Atrey

Folk deities form an important aspect of folk culture. They are distinct from Brahmanical gods as they are aboriginal in character and their references are found mostly in folklore and folk literature. They usually do not figure in Puranic or Brahmanical literature unless they have been Sanskritised and integrated into the Brahmanical pantheon of gods. Unlike the Brahmanical gods who are worshipped at pan-Indian level the influence of local deities is restricted to a particular region or a locality.

These deities exist in the form of *grama devtas*, *grama devis*, sati devis and *Naga devtas*, in various regions of India. In each region they exhibit their own peculiarities depending on the socio-cultural and physiographical conditions of the region.

In Jammu region also we find continued existence of folk deites in form of gram devtas and gram devis (village deities), Naga devtas (snake deities), Shaheed devtas (martyr deities), and Silabantis (sati deities) and Aaghat devtas (exotic deities). Many of them have attained the status of folk and regional deities due to their prominence and reverence by the people in the whole region. Herein they are popularly referred to as *Kula devtas* and *Kula devis* due to

the reason that the people in the region revere them as family deities. Their veneration is foremost in every ritual and auspicious ceremony.

The present paper attempts to bring to light the Sati deities of the region and look into the reasons behind the performance of Sati. A detailed analysis can help us understand the status of women in preceding ages. In this regard both literary evidence (ballads and legends) and archaeological evidence (shrines) have been taken into consideration.

Sati deities fall in the genre of martyr deities which includes *Shaheed devtas* (male) as well. They are also family deities and many of them have now acquired the status of folk deities. The present author has documented more than fifty such deities. The analysis of the ballads and legends connected with them shows that these women were either killed or got sacrificed in the cause of humanity or for other various reasons. Once the victim died, the guilty person or community started revering the dead person, to escape her wrath and anger.

The ballads and legends connected with Sati deities show that they committed sati due to following reasons.

Sati on the death of husband: Many of the *Sati* deities include those womenfolk who became sati on the death of their husbands. These include *Sati Thakyal Rani, Sati Nagru, Sati Radhika, Bua Lohari* and *Bua Chunadi* etc. Sati Thakyal Rani was the queen of *Raja Dharmchand Chib* of *Chibhal.* According to the ballad, she is said to have committed sati on hearing the news of her husband having been killed by the soldiers of Ibrahim Lodhi (last ruler of Lodhi dynasty of Delhi who was defeated by Babur). *Sati Radhike* is the kula deity of Slathia Rajputs and her *Debri*

(shrine) is situated at *Gopalsar* in Guraha Slathia in Jammu tehsil. She was married to *Kumedan* Gopal Singh, a close aide of *Raja Suchet Singh* of Bandralta. When he died in Lahore along with Raja Suchet singh, *Radhike* also became Sati at her place.

The ballad of *Bua Lohari* tells that her husband was killed by a member of *Baghyal* clan and she also became Sati with him. The killer and his clan had to face a lot of problems after it. Therefore people of *Baghyal* clan got *Dehri* built in her memory and worshipped her as *Kula* deity. Her Dehri is at Salal village in Reasi where members of *Baghyal* clan seek forgiveness.

Sati Nagru, Kula deity of the royal family of Bhadu is another example of woman becoming sati on the death of her husband. As per the ballad, her husband, claimant to the throne, was killed by Prithvipal (another claimant to the throne). Therefore, she also committed Sati. The ballad further tells that when she sat on the pyre of her husband, no one in the village would light the fire out of fear of Prithvipal's wrath. Prithvipal had ordered that nobody should light pyre of Sati. Ultimately family priest came forward to do it after three days and he was blessed by sati and was designated by her as the main priest for her shrine.

"None in Bhadu shall light the pyre,

Strict order prithvi pal made,

for three days lay dead body on pyre."

Bua Tripata, Kula deity of Ambharian Rajputs also became sati on the death of her husband. The story in her ballad tells that she was a newlywed Brahmin lady who had just arrived at her husband's house. Her husband was a minister with local ruler of Ambarian state (small principality in Akhnur area in ancient times). When minister

was away for his marriage, other courtiers poisoned the ears of ruler against the minister and on his return, he was called by Raja. Before going to the palace he told his wife that if anything unfortunate happens, she should become sati. There was some kind of stampede heard which convinced Tripta that her husband had been killed, so she committed sati. The royal family in order to escape the wrath of innocent woman deified her as its *kula* deity. Another version of the ballad tells that Tripta killed herself when her husband was actually killed by the ruler.

Sati on the death of fiancé: Similarly we also have examples of women committing Sati on the death of their fiancé. The pertinent example is that of Bua Laddo and Bua Pagadi. Bua Laddo became sati on the death of her fiancé Bhalla. He is said to have been killed by the robbers while he was proceeding to her (bride's) place to marry her. He had stopped at a place to drink water when he was attacked by the robbers and killed.

The ballad of Bua Pagadi tells us that she committed suicide, when she came to know that her fiancé had immolated him[1]. As the story goes her fiancé was patient of tuberculosis. One day he was scolded by his sister in law for being a burden on the family. He was not able to tolerate it and committed suicide. When Bua Pagadi came to know about the incident, she also became sati. She is the Kula deity of Harijan jatis in Ranbir singh pura tehsil of Jammu district.

Sati on the death of son: Women in the region are also said to have become sati when they were grieved by the death of their sons. *Dati Chiragu* of Hiranagar and *Bua Bachanu* of Kathua are pertinent cases in this regard

Dati Chiragu committed sati on the funeral pyre of

her son who had died of snakebite. Her only son *Radhe* was bitten by a snake and became seriously ill. She took him to the nearest *Naga* shrine and pleaded for his life but he died and she died along with him[2]. It is pertinent to mention here that *Nag Pachmi* is not celebrated in the village since that day.

Similarly according to the ballad of *Bua Bachanu,* she committed sati when her only son was killed by her brother for gold. When she died her parental family asked for forgiveness from her. They consecrated her as their kula deity and started worshipping her in order to escape her wrath[3]. She is the Kula deity of Tadiyal Rajputs (parent family).

Sati on the death of father: *Bua Kodi* is a case of child sati. She became *sati* on the death of her father, *Baba Jitto,* the famous peasant deity who killed himself due to the atrocities of the feudal lord[4]. As the story in the ballad goes, *Baba Jitto* was peasant who had worked hard on his fields. However when the grain was reaped, the feudal lord wanted to carry away major portion of it as tax. The poor peasant was unable to stop him from doing so and killed himself on the heap of his grain. *Bua Kodi,* who was just a child of eight years, also killed herself. Her ballad is sung along with that of *Baba Jitto* and sometimes independently as well. She also enjoys the status of a village deity. Her ballad contains an insight into childhood of a girl in the region.

Sati due to the atrocities of the in-laws: Women in the region are known to have become Sati due to the atrocities of their in-laws.

The ballad of *Bua Bhukhi* tells us that she got married in childhood and had to work very hard at house of her in-laws. In due course her health started deteriorating and

she fell seriously ill. However, she was not properly attended to nor was given any medication. Even her parents did not bother to enquire about her though she had sent many messages of her illness to them. So she died for want of medication and proper care and attention. After her death her parents got her shrine built to escape her wrath and to undo their mistake. Her shrine is in Madun village in Kathua district.

Bua Amro is a story of a daughter-in-law killed by her mother-in-law. According to the ballad, she belonged to *Yadav Gadgal Brahmin* family of Karlup village and was married in neighbouring village of TkriKheri. Her father gave lot of dowry in marriage. He also got a well dug up in her in-law's house. In spite of all this her mother-in-law used to beat her harshly and one day the thrashing was so hard that she died. After the death of *Bua Amro,* her in-laws got a shrine built in her memory to repent their mistake[5].

Sati due to wrong medication and superstitions: Women who died untimely death have also been given the status of sati deities. Here mention may be made of *Bua Sheela or Sheelawati* of Govindsar. She is said to have died due to wrong medication and superstitious behaviour of her family. She was born at Khkhali village and was married in Govindsar village. Once, she became seriously ill and a local doctor *(vaid)* was called. After giving medicine, he advised the family not to give her anything to eat or to drink untill he pays next visit. *Bua* became thirsty and asked for water again and again. But she was denied the same because of the advice of the *vaid* and she died thirsty.

Vaid commanded , neither water nor food !
Without water bua cries, asking again and again
Without water bua died, parents are to be blamed[6].

After her death, the family felt remorse and got a shrine built in her name to give her peace and ask for forgiveness from her[7].

Atrocities of feudal lords: Women who suffered at the hands of feudal lords also appear to have become sati.

Ballad of *Bua Banga* is a story of a widow's struggle against the atrocities of feudal lord of *Thada Galwal* village. The feudal lord of *Thada galwal* was under the suzerainty of Bhadu state[8]. He wanted to build a new palace for himself. Therefore he started raising money by collecting more taxes. He forcibly collected taxes from his subjects by inflicting atrocities. Bua Banga raised her voice against this and also asked other villagers not to give excessive taxes.

"Tax I will pay not! I kill myself
Soldiers done a bad thing!"[9]

Soldiers of feudal lord tried to arrest her for her defiance of the feudal order. When they came to arrest her, she locked herself in the house and taking her infant girl child in her lap, she set her house on fire and became sati.

"Injured Bua Banga came home, in courtyard!
Inside the house she bolted the door! Sat on the floor!
Took in lap, her only daughter! Set the house on fire!
Burnt herself to death! made no cries!"[10]

While dying, she cursed feudal lord. The feudal lord became terrified and immediately stopped collecting taxes. In order to escape the wrath of Bua Banga, he got her shrine (Dehri) built near his fort and deified her as family deity (*Kula Devi*).

Ballad of *Dabboj wali dati* also carries the tale of a woman who resented atrocities of a feudal lord called

Lalpal. She is said to have killed herself with a dagger when she failed to stop feudal lord from taking her only cow, the only source of livelihood for her. She belonged to Dabboj village in Samba district.

The ballads of *Bua Banga* and *Dabboj wali dati* tell us the stories of enlightened women who not only fought for their own rights but for social justice as well. They also give us an insight into the atrocities of feudal lords.

The above discussion on the ballads of sati deities shows that Sati cult in Jammu region includes not only women who committed sati on the death of their husbands but also those women who committed sati on the death of their sons, fiancé and father. Ironically Sati appears to have been committed only on the death of a male. We do not find any reference to sati being committed on the death of mother or sister. Moreover the large number of *satis* are those women who got killed or immolated themselves largely for reasons such as atrocities of in-laws, victims of dowry, wrong medication. At the same time the cult also includes women who raised their voice against feudal atrocities.

These Sati deities are worshipped in the form of *moharas*, which are a kind of memorial stones. They are usually three-dimensional stone structures or in the shape of a square or rectangular relief. The height is not more than two to three feets. As far as the style is concerned, according to an expert, the formal treatments range from classical to semi-classical to folk.

The common motif depicts sati as either standing independently or riding a palanquin carried by bearers. Where she stands alone, she is usually shown holding a

'*Kalasa*' or fan in one of the hands. Some of the memorial stones also depict a hero on horseback and sati riding a palanquin together for example that of *Data Bhalla* and *Dati Laddo* and also *Baba Nor* and *Dati Narma*[11]. The medium used in making of the image is usually the locally available raw material.

These moharas are placed in shrines called *Debaris*. *Debri* is a kind of miniature temple form whose height varies between three meters to one inch. There's hardly any space for a person to sit inside while in some *dehras* a person or two can sit inside to perform the rituals. These temples and *debaris* are usually found situated near some natural resource water strain, small tank, and ponds or in deep forests, top of the hills etc.

Reflections on regional society

A detailed analysis of ballads of sati deities has helped us to discern following facts about womenfolk in the region.

"The term Sati or *Silabanti* has a wider connotation in context of Jammu region. It includes not only women who committed sati on the death of their husbands or sons but also those women who got killed or immolated themselves for various reasons such as atrocities of in-laws, victims of dowry, wrong medication. At the same time we also have examples of women fighting for social justice by raising voice against feudal lords. The *Silabanti* deities like *Bua Amro* and *Bua Bukhi* were the victims of dowry system. *Bua Amro* was killed by her mother-in-law for bringing little dowry. Likewise *Bua Bhukhi* was forced by her in-laws to do hard labour. It appears that the victimized woman sometimes killed herself or was killed due to the atrocities of the

in-laws and out of fear the family starts worshipping the daughter-in-law to escape her wrath.

Performing sati was a common practice that was resorted to by women in the region in hour of distress.

It was not only limited to women of Rajput clans but women from all classes of region practised it. *Bua bhukhi* was Brahmin, *Bua sheelawati* belonged to Majahan *Jati* whereas *Bua Banga* was Rajput and *Bua Pagadi* was from Harijan community.

This custom was prevalent only in the plains of Jammu only. The sati deities are found concentrated in plains of Jammu and not in the hilly areas of the region. We do not find any shrine or story of Sati deity in hills.

The ballads also help us to understand the rituals connected with birth and marriage rituals. The birth rituals varied according to the caste of the sati. The first bath ritual performed for girl child is done on 12^{th} day as in case of *Bua Bhukhi* being Brahmin whereas in Majahans it is five days as in case of Bua Satywati.

Likewise details of marriage can also be studied from the ballads. The ballads of Bua Bhukhi and Bua Tripta contain details of marriage ceremony and rituals connected with it.

The narratives also tell us that girls were usually married before puberty, whereas boys were married at a little advanced age. The ballads of *Bua Tripta* and *Bua Bukhi* tell us that they were married off before attaining puberty at the age of seven years.

Conclusion

The overall picture of status of women in the region as evident through ballads is not encouraging. They appear to be a suppressed lot who suffered at the hands of the society in one way or the other. She was victim of dowry system and we find many instances where she killed herself or was killed due to the atrocities of the in-laws and consequently out of fear, the family started worshipping the daughter-in-law to escape her wrath. However, in spite of the fact that women suffered in the society, the ballads also tell us the stories of enlightened women who not only fought for their own rights but for social justice as well. A further detailed investigation into this cult of sati deities can help us know about the women in the region who make half of the population and the role of the sati ballads in this becomes all the more important as they can act as alternative source to understand the regional society.

References

1 Her dehri is at Bukori village in R.S. Pura. She is the Kula deity of the Local Harijan community.

2 Her dehri is at Ghamyal village in Hiranagar tehsil.

3 Her Dehri is in Kathua district and she is the Kula deity of Tadyal Rajputs.

4 Their major shrines are at Kanachak, Jhiri and Addhar Jitto in Jammu.

5 Her shrine is situated on Jammu Gajnusu road. Her mela(annual congregation) takes place on Kartik purnima

6 Complete ballad given in Om Goswami (,ed.) Dogri Lok Gathye, Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Jammu, 1990, p.98.

7 Her shrine is at Govindsar village in Kathua district.

8 Bhadu was one of the twenty two hill principalities which now forms part of Bhillawar tehsil in Kathua district.

9 Complete ballad given in Om Goswami (,ed.) Dogri Lok Gathye, Jammu & Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages, Jammu, 1990, p.96-97.

10 Ibid.p.96

11 The joint Mohara of Data bhalla and Dati Laddo is located at Prawah village in Nagbani area on Jammu -Akhnur national highway. Shrine of Baba Nor and Dati Narma at Village Chaklawal in R.S.Pura in Jammu district.

Bibliography

1. Micheal Owen Jones *Putting Folklore to Use*, The University Press of Kentucky, 1994
2. Alf Hiltebeital *Criminal Gods and Demon Devotees: Essays on the Guardians of Popular Hinduism*, State University of New York Press, Albany,1989
3. Charles Edwin Price *A Student Guide to Collecting Folklore*, The Overmountain Press Tennessee,
4. *Listening to History: The Authencity of Oral Evidence*, Barnes and Nobles Books, 1988
5. *Donald A. Ritchie Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide,* Donald A. Ritchie, *Oxford University Press,2003*
6. Omacanda Handa *Naga Cults and Traditions in the Western Himalayas,* Omacanda Handa, Indus Publishing company
7. Surinder Gadalgal, *Marh Block De Shaheed Devtas*

(The author teaches at law shcool in Jammu university)

RAGA AND THE MUSICAL TRADITION

Savita Bakshi

Ragas have been part of the Indian musical tradition from times immemorial. However, it is true that there have been constant introductions of new ragas and raganis (female modification of the raga). No matter which period of time or scripture the raga may belong to, it is possible to understand and comprehend it only by doing an extensive study of the entire tradition of Indian music. Music is not a stagnant subject but a field marked with constant and unceasing evolution. The evolutionary redefinitions and modifications automatically become assimilated within the musical tradition.

The phrase 'Shabdam Gunkam Akasham' implies that the characteristic feature (gun) of akash (sky) is shabad (word). Music begins from dhvani (sound). When the sound acquires musical notes it turns into 'nad'. Nad' gives birth to 'shruti' (pitch), 'shruti' begets 'svar' (note), 'svar' begets 'saptak' (scale), and 'scale' is the forefather of raga as we know it. 'Saptak' is indeed the source from which innumerable varieties of ragas originate. Pt. Venekatamakhi has mentioned in his book *Chaturdandi Prakashika* that 34,848 ragas can be created from the single svar saptak (scale). In fact, introducing vadi (sonant) and samvadi

(consonant) modifications to these ragas can further expand their number and make them almost innumerable. Hence, categorization of ragas has always been a problem.

A look at ancient history is enough to convince one that not all the ragas were known at any given point of time. The introduction and reintroduction of ragas is something that gets influenced by the interest of the community's tastes and preferences, which as we all know is forever changing. Sometimes it was a certain sequence of ragas that gained popularity, sometime it was another sequence that gained people's favour. Sometimes ragas wee categorized according to the rules of singing and sometimes they were categorized based on gender (male and female ragas). Sometimes they were classified as 'gram' and 'desi'. Sometimes ragas were categorized as 'shudh' (pure), 'chayalag' (raga in which all raga svars are present) and 'sankirn' (combination of two or more ragas) and sometimes they were seen only as 'margi' or 'desi'.

Music is something that is constantly changing and acquiring new meanings. No wonder the music of ancient times is very different from what we get to see today. We can categorize music based on time periods into three classes: Ancient, medieval and modern. One of the foremost textual documentations of ancient India is the "Natyashaastra". It was written somewhere between the third and the fifth century. It primarily discusses 'natya' (drama) and its strong relationship with music. How significant a part music played in natya (drama) is palpable from the fact that six chapters from chapter 28-33 have been devoted solely to music. However, at that time raga was not a known concept and instead people recognized the phenomenon as jati singing.

Matang's 8th century book Brihadeshi was a phenomenal work on the ragas. The book also testifies that 'raga' as a word and concept had already permeated the concept of the people of that time. Matang classified ragas into two distinct categories: Grama raga and Bhasha or Desi raga. He further classified desi raga into bhasha and vibhasha geeti (style of song) types.

Another important text after Matang's book was Pt. Sarangdev Krit's *Sangeet Ratnakar*. In many ways it laid down the foundation for further development of both the southern and northern styles of music. Like Matang, Pt. Sarangdev also classified his ragas according to song types (geeti). But unlike Matang, he did not include bhasha and vibhasha in his classification of desi raga. Instead, he included ragang, bhashang, kriyang, upang and other geetis (song types). He was the last of the ancient musicians and with him came the end of Jati singing and gram raga.

It was in the medieval times that the classification between raga and ragini came into being. The classification was done adhering to a family hierarchy. There were six main ragas under the raga and ragini classification. The six ragas were followed by six raginis with eight sons and eight daughters-in-law. The six ragas were: 1. Hindol, 2. Megh, 3. Deepak, 4. Sri, 5. Maalkauns, 6. Bhiarav.

In the year 1813, Muhammad Raza wrote a book by the name *Nagmate Aasfi* in which he argued that the raga and ragini classification was wrong. He also evolved a novel technique for the same purpose but it could not sustain against the ravages of time.

In the present era, there are many ways of classifying ragas. One of the most popular and recent is Bhatkande's raga classification based on scale type or 'thatt'. There are

ten main 'thatt's under this system of classification. They are: kalian, bilawal, khamaj, bhairav, purvi, marva, kafi, asavari, bhairavi and todi. Bhatkande named each 'thatt' based upon the most important raga of the particular that.

Moreshwar Khare is another pioneer in music who developed a new set of raga classification in which he estimated the number of most important ragas to be around thirty.

We can conclude that raga classification has had an eventful history. The most important and common in today's times, however, is Bhatkande's classification.

Raga has a very important place within the tradition of Gurmat Sangeet. The ragas that are used within this tradition are of shudh (pure), chayalag (raga in which all raga svars are present) and sankirn (combination of two or more ragas) nature. The raga classification within the Sikh tradition is not based upon the raga and ragini system. The word ragini has, in fact, not even been used anywhere in it. It is also important to note that Guramt Sangeet has, by and large, remained unaffected from the 'thatt' classification and kirtan singers continue to sing according to ancient rules. It is possible to detect the ancient ragas and their various forms in the musical compositions.

For instance:

Dhann su raga surangade alapat sam tikh jayi

(vaar ramkali, mahla 5, Adi Granth 958)

Samna ragan vich su bhala bhai jitu basiya man aayi

(Shloka, mahla1, Adi Granth 1423)

The main purpose of Gurmat Sangeet was to bring humanity closer to God and goodness. It aimed at removing the mirages of sin and, thereby, make the human

heart clean and happy. Raga has certainly contributed a lot in helping Gurmat Sangeet attain its purpose.

The credit for the immense popularity of Indian classical music in the state of Punjab goes to Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He touched the chord of emotion and happiness in the common man's heart with the help of his pad or devotional poetry. He almost stirred the Sikh consciousness giving birth to a new age of worship where music was synonymous with God.

References

1. Shanti Govardhan, Sangeet Darpan
2. Dr. Panna Lal Madan, Sangeet Shastra Vigyan

(The author is Additional Secretary, Jammu, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.)

PLURAL SOURCES OF KASHMIRI MYTHS

Abid Ahmad

Distinguished by their ability to imagine the unimaginable and assign meaning to meaningless, human beings have always been meaning-seekers, and therefore myth-makers. Mythology could be about the incomprehensible part of the physical world or even about what we call the spiritual realm, but the epistemes of myths fuse together the spiritual and the mundane. The content of myths may occur within the bounds of time and space in some distant past, however, their retelling is a perpetual recurrence in collective memory. It is an eternal event that occurs in continuum. Myth is not merely an occurrence in chronological history, but also an ahistorical truth: "A myth was an event which in some sense, had happened once, but which happened all the time."[1]

The history of Kashmir is rich with mythology. Wherever there are significant geographical points, such as lakes (Wullar, Manasbal, Dal, Tarsar Marsar), or mountains (Harmukh, Mahadev, Takht-e Sulaiman, Koh-e Maran), there are corresponding myths. In fact, the creation myths abound about the emergence of the valley of Kashmir itself. All these myths have gone into the making of the collective psyche of the Kashmiris.The narration and construction of these myths in Kashmir are diverse. The myths in Kashmir

can be classified in three categories: First, there are myths which sound like myths found in other areas around the world. Such myths include the shraz which is a typically Kashmiri mythological bird. In the myth, the bird is in love with the moon and attempts to hug it. In its pursuit of the moon, the bird goes atop a height and, guessing the moon to be closer, jumps off the height to grab the moon. It falls down to death and from its ashes rises another shraz. The myth reads like an indigenous version of the mythical Greek phoenix.

Secondly, there are myths exclusive to Kashmir. Such myths include those of the origin and emergence of the bowl-shaped valley. In the Hindu story of the valley's origin, the myth tells that the valley was submerged under water and was salvaged after the holy intervention of Kashyap Rishi, a Hindu saint, who exorcised demons from the valley and it became habitable. The Muslim version states that the Prophet Solomon once during his flight passed over this valley which was steeped in water. He landed on the top of a mount which is referred to as Takht-e-Sulaiman (the Throne of Solomon) at Dalgate area in Srinagar city. He ordered one of the jinn under him, Kashu, to drain the water from the valley. Kashu promised to do so if he was granted Miran, a fairy whom he had been courting for a long time. The Prophet Solomon agreed to grant him his wish, so Kashu went to Baramulla town in the extreme north of the Kashmir valley and struck the mountain range, wherefrom all the water drained out and this beautiful valley came into existence. Based on the two lovers, the valley was called Kashu-Miran, which later evolved into present Kashmir. While there are biblical allusions in this myth, the role of the Prophet Solomon as the one who identified the valley is restricted to Kashmir

alone. Ironically, the Bible has never been a classic reference in Kashmir. And, the ethnic Kashmiris refer to Kashmir as simply Kasheer.

Aka Nandun is another exclusively Kashmiri myth which features the most versified mythical character of a young lad who is slaughtered to teach his parents the lessons of detachment and selflessness. The story is about a childless couple whom a saint agrees to bless with a son on the condition that they would return the child to him after twelve years. The couple agrees, thinking that by the time the child turns twelve, the saint would have passed away in view of his old age. However, after twelve years, the saint reappears and asks for the son. The parents beg him for their child but to no avail. Once they agree to keep their promise after beseeching in vain, the saint slaughters the boy and asks the mother to cook his flesh. Once the cooking is done, she is asked to serve the cooked human meat to all family members including the dead boy and the saint. The mother, as advised by the saint, calls for her slaughtered child who appears on the scene while the saint disappears. The story is about self-denial and asceticism. It is narrated to teach the lessons of sacrifice, selflessness and detachment to this world.

Some historical characters have assumed mythical proportions by their popularity among Kashmiris. They have become the cultural icons of the identity of Kashmiris and symbolize their social and cultural ethos. Such characters include Lalla Ded, a symbol of purity and filial love, Nund Reosh, a symbol of devotion, spirituality and faith, Budshah, a symbol of justice and philanthropy, Rasul Mir, a symbol of passionate love, and especially Habba Khatoon, a symbol of sacrifice and commitment. Though a historical figure, Habba Khatoon has assumed mythical

dimensions. Many stories reflecting her predicament have crept into the Kashmiri mythology, including Zohra Khatoon, Shah Sayyar, Laila and Majnoon, Ghul-e Sanobar, Shirin Farhad, and Yusuf Zulaikha. Though the characters and the plots of these epic stories are Persian, these mythical stories were liberally adopted by Kashmiri poets.

Given its location at the confluence of major cultures, religions and civilizations, Kashmir could never have remained immune to cultural, religious, political and other influences that shaped its history. Ideologically, Kashmir converges three religious strains, Islam from the west, Hinduism from the south, Bhuddism from the east. Geographically, it was closely connected to the ancient silk route which was once a great corridor of trans-continental trade and dialogue of cultures and civilizations. Despite the diverse and distinct strains having been a part of its history, Kashmir has evolved an indigenous art of its own to negotiate the ruptures in its historical evolution and to adopt their influences in a creative manner. The same spirit gets reflected in its social and literary ethos. The resultant folk literature is now a common legacy of all the Kashmiris, irrespective of their religious or political stances.

Three illustrations are quoted below from its mythical history to substantiate the point. Irrespective of the historical transitions and the change in the dominant religions in the valley, the myth of Aka Nandun is a foundational myth in Kashmiri society. The myth is found in Buddhist period, Hindu period and Muslim period of the Kashmir history. This myth has been versified by various poets including Bahadur Ganai, Prakash Bhat Kurighami, Ramzan Bhat, Samad Mir, Abdul Ahad Zargar, and Muhammad Khar. From Shaivite Hinduism to Islamic Philosophy, all have contributed to the evolution of this

mythical story to its contemporary shape.

Similarly, the myth of Heemal and Nagray is typically a Hindu myth which, by the plot and the kind of pantheistic philosophy involved, should have been popular with Hindus only but is equally popular among Muslims and constitutes warp and woof of their cultural education.

Another case of the victory of populist sentiments over indoctrinated belief is the character of Lalla Ded, who is referred to as Lalleshwari by Orthodox Hindus and as Lalla Arifa by Persianised Muslims. At popular level, however, most Kashmiris refer to her simply as Lalla Ded. There are many marriage songs in Kashmir which converge diverse faiths to produce a common symphony and shared myths.

Kashmiri myths have been most prompt to react to changing sociopolitical realities. That's why we see a lot of myths of Mughal, Pathan, Sikh and Dogra history of Kashmir having a strong element of supernatural intervention, indicating to the frustration of Kashmiris over their plight during those hard times. Many historical anecdotes have become part of the Kashmiri mythological lore, despite their historical veracity. Similarly, the change in the socio-cultural milieu would unnoticeably change the mythical characters without changing their role. For example, after the arrival of Islam, Khwajah Khazr, helping the lost people find their way, replaced "Sodhe Brore te Bodhe Brore". "Seemurgh" replaced "Wuche Prangh". Though the characters change their names, their role remains the same. These myths pervade the gamut of Kashmiri literature, enriching it significantly. Some literature is woven around certain mythical characters alone. Kashmiri poetry is, for example, profusely informed by

myth and folklore. Similarly, most writers in Kashmiri language have resorted to myth and other forms of folklore as a scaffold on which to develop their contemporary plots and characters.

Reference:

1. Armstrong, Karen. Myth. New Delhi: Penguin. 2005.

(The author is Editor *Sheeraza English,* published by the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages. The paper was originally published in barazaonline.org, University of Columbia, USA.)

ABDUL AHAD NAZIM

The Poet of Intellect

Dr Gulzar A Rather
Translated from Kashmiri by Tanveer Ahmad

Abdul Ahad Nazim, as per Ghulam Mohammad Shad, was born in Bijbehara around 1816. Bijbehara was then the hub of literary and cultural activities. There were poets, intellectuals, orators who took birth there. The literati consisted of Zia-ud-Din Zia Anznoo, Ab. Majid Tak, Mohi-ud-Din Mehdi, Qamar Shah Khaki, Mohd Mukhtar Shah, Asad Shah and Baba Khaliq etc. Nazim had a literary environment at home so his schooling started right there under the patronage of his father Baba Nur-ud-Din. Nazim was also registered in a local school run by the famous Persian poet, intellectual and historian Mohd Khazir Muqbil. There, Nazim had the chance of meeting many other classmates.

Nazim was adept at writing many genres of literature like *Naat, Ghazal, Manqabat, Mathnavi, Marsia, Hiju, Hazal, Vetsan* etc. His contemporaries were Mehmood Gami and Rasool Mir and both were famous for the songs they wrote. Nazim talked of a different 'beloved' in his poetry and this made him a famous poet of his era.

Yaar yikhna cham kraav poshan
Zanh ti govuy na goshan myonuy
Bar ker gul chaen bardoshan
Zanh ti govuy na goshan myonuy

Qoala rustuy kar doala vuch tham
Maar zulfo dil lola buch tham
Maer meyt aem chaem husna boshan
Zanh ti govuy na goshan myon
Taaza ashaq Nazim chu aamut
Ritsi vati yar tshandni draamut
Pata laraan sahib hoshan
Zanh ti govuy na goshan myonuy
(Kulyat-e- Nazim)

Poets who came to limelight after Gami's era employed Persianized Kashmiri in their poetry. At times there were chaste Persian verses in a *Nazms* and *Ghazals* of these poets. It was a compulsion because Persian was the official language of the era. The characteristic feature that adored Rasool Mir's poetry was that he introduced, for the first time, male beloved which was later employed by the contemporary poets of that era. Shad[1] recalls;

> "Nazim too abided by the style introduced by Rasool Mir and familiarized by his contemporaries. He even took a lead among his contemporaries in many aspects".

Nazim also talked of feminine beauty in his poetry. He does not hide himself behind the rhetoric by using metaphors, similes and other figures of speech. Rather, in the style of Rasool Mir, he directly addresses his beloved, with sagacity and clarity. While Rasool Mir had once said *kongee havtay paan*, Nazim's poetry, as per Shad[2], was replete with such illustrations.

Dil goam tse pat taar mutsar daar Azizo
Myul goam deewanas ta zulfachi taari Azizo

Chay cheshma nargis zulfi sonbal roay gul hi tan
Yim tsoar gul aki phir pholmit kami vaari Azizo

It is believed 'Aziza or Azi' was a prostitute from Gojwara Srinagar.

Toatas wanta myein zaeriye
Asi ma roash haeriye
Chaeyn loalan hay maeriye
Asi ma roash haeriye
Puur mey traav chhokliy
Chhina harna tse path mokliy
Harno retmists bemaeriye
Asi ma roash haeriye

Again the usage of the term *haer* by Nazim is believed to be a reference to a Pandit lady who was married to one Tota Ram, who were neighbours of Nazim at Bijbehara.

Naat and *Manqabat* are two thematic genres of Kashmiri poetry. A *Naat* is a *Nazm* where the last messenger of Allah Prophet Mohammad (SAW) is eulogized and praised. The love for Prophet is to be expressed in such a way so that there is no chance of committing a blasphemous act.

Ba Khuda dewana baash, ba Muhammad hushiyaar

In the light of Kor'an, Allah, the Merciful, is the first *Naat Khwaan* - the first to eulogize the Prophet.

"Indeed Allah and His angels send prayers to Muhammad (SAW). O ye, believers, do send prayers and *darood* on Muhammad (SAW)". (Kor'an: Al Ahzab (33), Verse No. 56).

The history of *Naat* in Kashmiri goes back to the times of sheikh Nuruddin (RA), the 14th century religious poet.

Nazim takes recourse to eulogizing the Prophet instead of the beloved. His *Naats* are powerful and entail a

strong love for the Prophet and issue gusts of pain and agony of separation. Such has been the nature of his *Naats* that they were recited in local mosques at dawn break not so long ago.

Chus duur pyomut gatshith ruudum yaar Madinas
Tami nuura roshan gey dar-o-deewar Madinas
Soy jay behtar pesh-i-haq az kaa'ba-o-Arsh
Yeth jaayi bihith paana su sardaar Madinas

Abdul Ahad Nazim's few *Naats* had a folklorish tinge to them which made them famous with the masses. Prior to Nazim, Abdul Ahad Nadim had written in that style. Nazim's *Naat* of such a style is as below:

Arbaki sardar pem hoy paadan
Ashqan gosh faryaadan thaav
Arbas ta Ajmas chaen laadan
Ashqan gosh faryaadan thaav
Shad ker WaDduhah royik yaadan
Zara koana bara aftaabuk chaav
Ashqan gosh faryaadan thaav
WaLlail moay haav asi waat daaden
Ashqan gosh faryaadan thaav
and,
Ya Sayyidal Mursaleen yikhna soanůy
Loal aam chonuy haav deedar
Roashi yeti karhay poshi wathrunuy
Loal aam chonuy haav deedar

(Kuliyaat-e- Nazim)

Nazim is a famous epic poet of Kashmir. He has to his credit two epic poems 'Yusuf Zulaikha"- a manuscript which we have, sadly, lost and 'Zainul Arab'. Also, he has

composed a *Mathnavi Nama*. Maqbool Shah Kralvari too has written a *Mathnavi Nama*, which Mohammad Yusuf Taing, a famous Kashmir historian, has included in his book 'Kuliyaat-e Maqbool Shah Kralvari'. As per Shad, Kralvari has penned his *Mansoor Nama* in the same order as Nazim's *Mansoorul Haj* and is more detailed and comprehensive than Nazim's. Nazim's *Mathnavi Nama* is included in Shad's 'Kuliyaat'.

Zainul Arab is Nazim's famous epic. It is believed to have been inspired by Sheikh Fariduddin Attar's *Ilahi Namah*. It depicts the romance of *Zainul Arab* or Rabia and Ghulam Baktash. Baktash is a servant of Rabia's brother - Haris Shah. Once Baktash is singing in Haris Shah's darbar and Rabia sees him and falls in love with him. The romance becomes public. When Haris Shah hears of his sister's affair with Baktaash, he puts him in a dark well and imprisons his sister in a *hamam* where she dies a horrible death. The heat of the *hamam* forces her to write sonnets in honour of her lover on the walls of the *hamam*. After her death, Haris repents and, taking the help of his courtiers, sets out to set Baktash free from the well where he had imprisoned him. But Baktash kills Haris Shah and takes his own life away as well. The story comes to an end.

Nazim has actually loosely translated Atar's story. Although, Atar has rendered this plot in just 123 couplets, Nazim has penned some 712 couplets for the same story and gives it a proper epic shape and style. He has exploited rich linguistic resources while composing his epic. He has used simple but moving language. The poem also gives us the imagery of a local setting which beautifies the poem even more. The poem is a classic piece with strong literary texture to it.

Nazim has also written some elegies. One elegy that he wrote on the death of his younger brother is a powerful elegy and is regarded as a cornerstone in the history of elegy genre in Kashmiri language. Shauq[3] notes that the elegy is a shining example in the history of elegy genre in Kashmiri literature, full of technique, meaning and rhyme. It is profound in its melancholy. Amin Kamil reports that had Nazim continued to write in that style, he would have been a unique figure in Kashmir literary community. A few verses from this epic poem;

Subhuki waava! tsa chukh gama haten shad karaan
Gatshta tsa tas maar metis, wanta tsa feryaad karaan
Daed lad khasta dila, chaen wuchum yaad karaan
Aah-o-faryaad-o-fugaan naala zi bedaad karaan

Maatmik jama welith oas dohas gomut sham
Soz-e-dil oas tshataan seena tsataan dapni salaam

Nazim is a famous satirist. It is believed that his poetic fame spread far and wide which saddened many a people, including an Imam of the local Jama Masjid at Bijbehara namely Abdullah Shah. Abdullah, it is reported once met Nazim and ridiculed him contemptuously for his poetry and instead praised the poetic skills of Mehmood Gami by singing his verse;

Tamseel-e-Adam pristhaam hubaabas
Rind chukh zind kath aabas siyt

Nazim replied that if he (Nazim) was to produce few verses in the same style and metre, would he (Abdullah) regard him (Nazim) at par with Gami. Abdullah, it is reported, answered in the affirmative. Nazim read out loud;

Abdullah baaba oas manz mehraabas
Khargosh sind paenth khaabas siyt

Khaaba manz leka oas tsaaraan saabas
Rind chukh zind kath aabas siyt
Amis mala baabas rish chay siyt aabas
Titshiy yitsh kaefiras kaabas siyt
Patsh na yiyiy tay gari pristsh baabas
Rind chukh zind kath aabas siyt

(Kashmiri Zaban aur Shayari, Vol. II. Azad)

It is believed that Saba was Abdullah's wife. Abdullah was ashamed to hear the verses and left for his home in disgust.

'Asi buuz angreiz zeriye aay' is Nazim's famous '*biju*'. It is believed that when Abdul Ahad Azad saw this work of art, he described Nazim as Kashmir's Khakani[4]. The legend goes that Nazim's marriage was fixed with a cousin of his which, however, broke soon after their engagement. This saddened Nazim to the core and that too for a lifetime. On the wedding day of his cousin, Nazim wrote of his pain.

Kaatsur khesith kaatir khrechey
Kud cheche Mubarak
Wan wunis draayas aapa ta pechi
Kud cheche Mubarak
Mahraaz laalas machi techi
Royas zitsi traavaeniy
Changer panas Kangri grechi
Kud cheche Mubarak
Brontha draayas kokar bay
Aji aamats ta aji aas praayi
Aji zeichi ta aji aasi chhochey
Kud cheche Mubarak
Rasul saeban kya ker kaem

Shen shen nafran traevin traem
Hisa aayakh ziy ziy mechey
Kud cheche Mubarak
Taftaani ta baekir khaani
tee asi buuz khuda zaani
Aayakh ta lazikh yechi
Kud cheche Mubarak

(Kulyaat-e- Nazim)

Nazim's fate, as per Shad , was no different from that of Kashmir's most famous poet Rasool Mir. Both died young. It is believed that once Shaekh Ahmad Tarbali once visited Bijbehara to pay homage at the shrine of Baba Nasibuddin Gazi. Nazim was there and Tarbali is reported to have said that he (Nazim) was 'afflicted' by some deadly disease. Nazim died at the age of 35 in 1851. He was laid to rest in the same shrine besides the saint Baba Nasibuddin Gazi.

Ama War, from Arwani Bijebhara, pays tribute to Nazim like this;

Ama war tul qalam lekh Nazimas ghazala tsi jaan
Kem kem drayi doari faeni yaad thavav shoqa saan
(Ama War, raise your pen and offer a tribute, glowing, to Nazim
How many left this mortal world, that we may, often, recall)

References

1. Shad, G. M. Kulyaat-e-Abdul Ahad Nazim, p. 37.
2. Shad, G. M. Kulyat-e-Abdul Ahad Nazim, p. 40.
3. Naji Munavvar and Shafi Shauq. Kaeshir Zaban ta Adab, p.185.
4. Khakani was a famous Persian writer.

Bibliography

1. Shad, Ghulam Mohammad. 1972. *Kuliyaat-e-Abdul Ahad Nazim*. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
2. Munavvar, Naji. 2012. *Kaeshir Zaban ta Adbuk Tavareekh*. Srinagar: Ali Mohammad and Sons.
3. Atish, Ghulam Nabi. 2011. *Sarmaya ta Saam*. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
4. Kamil, Amin. "*Lol-a- Mathnavi Number, Sheeraza* (ed.). Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
5. Shad, Ghulam Mohammad. 2010. *Molankun*. Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.
6. Hajini, Aziz. 2007. *Kaeshir Naat* (ed.). New Delhi: Sahitya Academy.

(The author is Research Assistant, Kashmiri, J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages.)

SNOW AND FUN IN KASHMIR

Manoj Sheeri

Paiwan choo Moha zan
Saman choo Koha zan
Chalan choo chora zan

(It falls like a mosquito, accumulates like a mountain and runs away like a thief.)

Snow is the answer of this Kashmiri riddle. There are a number of riddles, songs which revolve around snow. Winter comes and brings with itself white snow and black nights. Winter is seen as a demon which eats up many hundred quintals of charcoal yet blows out cold winds. However at the same time winter in its bosom brings incidents and happenings which carve a niche in any Kashmiri's memoirs.

A Kashmiri damsel clad in a Noori Pheran and finely designed Kashmiri wool cap slips on the white road. She rolls in such a way that the ashes come out of the fire pot. As the damsel rolls on the road, everybody nearby laughs. The poor girl recollects herself and her articles. Before she leaves the spot, she too laughs, as she is informed by her friend what has gone 'right' or 'wrong' with her face. Many incidents like this occur in Kashmir during winter which provides joy, relief and freshness to its inhabitants.

After the cool, clear and most pleasant of all months

October comes November. It is during this month that yellow leaves fall from trees and Kashmiri house holders are seen burning these leaves. The charcoal thus prepared is dumped either in cowsheds or on the top storey of the house. This charcoal is used as a fodder for the fire pots (Kangri) which keeps all the residents of snow valley warm. Walking in a groove of Chinar trees, particularly in Naseem Bagh, is most joy-giving. Dark yellow leaves swiftly relieve themselves from the branches and sweetly kiss the mother earth. A light breeze increases the number of leaves manifold.

In the month of December, there is snow fall. In January and February, snow falls in enormous quantities in the plains and on the mountains. One sleeps in the evening leaving behind the dusty streets outside. To his amazement when he wakes up next morning and comes out, he finds everything white. A neighbour peeping outside and having a salt tea cup in his or her hand cries 'Noh Sheen Mubarak' (Greetings on the first snow fall of the season). It is difficult for many to reach mosques on such mornings. On such mornings, the elders of a household come out with spades and carve a path in the snow.

Snowfall in early winter or late autumn creates a lot of problems for Kashmiris. In 1813 AD, there was a great famine in Kashmir. This famine was caused by an early and heavy snowfall in October. When it snows, Kashmiris move on streets like penguins, hands tucked in Pheran. Every Pheran has a fire pot inside. There is no college or school. Roads, streets lanes and by-lanes get blocked; there is no electricity as electric polls get uprooted; no water as taps get frozen. One has to burn something under the tap for restoring the water flow. Television sets have a good rest, but radio keeps on crying. The local bulletins are filled with

news items like.....Valley experiences heavy snowfall....4 ft snow recorded....Jammu Srinagar highway closed....Efforts on to clear the highway. 200 men working round the clock.... Examinations postponed... Power cuts...Charcoals scarce and Kerosene hardly available. The life outside the home gets frozen.

However, the happenings inside houses are lively. The boy who had gone outside to fetch bread from bakers shop returns with all his hair covered with pearls of snow. His nose and ears gone red due to cold outside. At the very sight of this, children in particular and elders in general pass remarks on the poor boy. After warming himself inside as well as outside, he tells the story how he got rid of a dog, who had got nothing to eat last night as it snowed.

A mixture of snow and sugar is served during the afternoon, when almost all the members of a family are basking in sun. Some kids even try to make ice cream as making it is easy in a temperature around zero degree centigrade. Though ice cream is the need of summer, but for fun it is prepared in winter in Kashmir.

There is no chirping of birds in the early mornings as they rest and warm in their nests with their heads stuck in feathers. Same is the case with common Kashmiris. Although elders wake a little bit earlier, youngsters sleep till eight and some who are more 'loved' sleep up to nine or even ten in the morning. It is very difficult to sight birds other than crows. However they come in dozens, when some eatables or food grains are put on the verandah. Mischievous guys trap birds like sparrows under baskets. Children sit like cats and watch the birds stealing food grains.

During the daye children make their own group which distances itself from the elders. while women of a

household are busy in the kitchens their male partners are busy in either spinning wool or weaving carpets, or working on shawls.

All of a sudden there is a hue and cry in the children's group as there is a tiny blast in one of the child's fire pot because the egg which he might have stolen from the poultry shed where a broody hen might have laid it, explodes. In the little stampede which follows this blast, some fire pots get kicked unconsciously by the children.

"Try to be careful with fire pot" is the writing on the wall. Elders use these words to create 'fear' among the children. However, more often than not they themselves are held responsible for accidents connected with fire pot.

It is usually in the afternoons that one among elders having some sense of humour collects a groups of little brats and starts telling them fantastic stories about fairies. Outside a teenager falls and breaks his arm as he tries to break an icicle suspended from cornice. Scores of icicles suspend from every rooftop. These icicles look like carrots of glass. Some among them are fat while some are thin. Children as well as elders break these 'glass rods' and eat them up.

When it snows there are no fresh vegetables. It is pulses in dinner and pulses in lunch, of course with dried turnips and knoll khol pickles. Not only dried turnips but also dried raddish, dried brinjals etc used in abundance to meet the fresh vegetable scarcity. Vegetables are dried in summer and autumn and stored in big earthen pots. Walnuts, apples and almonds are also stocked in these big earthen pots. Pots filled with fruits are always the targets of the children. They make all sorts of schemes for stealing these fruits from the store. Every evening, the elder woman of a house get a basketfull of nuts and apples from store,

and loving quarrels are witnessed among the youngsters over these fruits. Nuts and apples is a combination which has survived the onslaughts of oranges and bananas so far in countryside. Besides fruits, children want something called 'freedom' from the strict vigil of elders. Far away from the imagination of the grandfather and granny, children steal a march to upper most storey. Parents and elders caution the little wards against taking fire pots to the upper-most storey, as on the upper-most storey fuel and fodder is stored. But the kids anyhow manage to take fire pots with them. As has been proved in the past, this kidding on part of kids proves costly at times. The uppermost storey is used as an indoor stadium.

Children play a whole lot of games there. Most easy of all is 'Sozlong' another is 'Baantan'. Sometimes children are bored as snow restricts their movements. And then a sunny day invites all to come out of closed chambers. While the aged ones warm their bones on a sunny day, the young and not so young involve one another in famous 'Sheen jung'. 'Jung' means a fight or a war but on small scale and 'Sheen' means snow. Thus the name 'Sheen Jung'. The warring parties throw at one another snow balls. It is just like 'holi', however in place of colours kashmiri's use snow. Not only this, some teenagers try their hands at artistically making human shapes out of snow. In the evenings, water is boiled to wash the legs and feet so as to get over fatigue which occur due to exposure of body parts to snow.

Snow is lifeline of Kashmir and its people and as long as Kashmir continues to receive snow, fun will remain associated with it.

(The author is a Srinagar-based writer.)

FARID AD-DIN ATTAR'S *CONFERENCE OF BIRDS*

A Repository of Universal Human Values

Asma Shaw

Literature is great because of its universality. It is powerful enough to supersede the narrow interests of a class in favour of humanity as a whole. It does not deal with the specific society of a specific community, but with the society of human beings as a whole.

Literature contains the universal and the particular combined together. According to Aristotle, literature indicates the universal element, i.e., what is true for all times and ages and the particular, i.e., what is true of the men, events, customs, culture, and manners of an age. To quote John Bailey: "It must be at once individual life and universal. If Homer contained nothing but what was abstractedly or universally true, he would be dull. He must have, as he has, many things which surprise, amuse, even perhaps, disgust us who live in so different an age and country. He must have things which are peculiar to the Greeks of his day, and even things peculiar to himself alone among the Greeks. Without that, he would not have individuality or even nationality; and without individuality and nationality there is no life in literature. But if he were only Homer or only Greek, he would be something worse

than dull; he would be dead for us, because there would be no link between us; dead, because the life of poetry needs an immortal and universal element without which its lease of life is a very short one. A poet cannot carry himself and his own age and their idiosyncrasies and peculiarities unless he provides them with the elixir of immortality which is universal truth." In other words, literature is manifestation of life as handled by the writer's personality. His distinctive imagination, his slant of outlook, his feelings, and the character of his experience constitute the medium through which his reading of life is communicated to the reader. But his feelings and thoughts and fusion of elements extracted from the chaos of life have deeper and paramount significance for all. According to Middleton Murry, "The highest style is...... a combination of the maximum of personality with the minimum of impersonality: on the one hand, it is a concentration of peculiar and personal emotion, on the other, it is a complete projection of this personal emotion into the created thing. There is no antithesis between personal and impersonal art." That is why Aristotle said that "poetry is more philosophical than history." What he meant was that literature is the mixture of the personal and universal. The whole effort of a sincere man is to build his personal impression into universal pattern.

The Conference of Birds (Manteq at-Tair) is the best known work of Farid ud-Din Attar, a Persian Poet who was born at some time during the 12C in Nishapour (where Omar Khayam was born) in Iran and died in the same city early in the 13C. His name Attar is a form of the word from which we get the "atter of roses" and it indicates a perfume seller. The Conference of Birds is a poem about Sufism, the doctrine propounded by the mystics of Islam. In Mantaq al

Tair, Attar has transformed belief into poetry, much in the way Milton or Dante did.

The allegorical framework of the poem is as follows: the birds of the world gather together to seek a king. They are told by the hoopoe that they have a king - the *simorgh*- but that he lives far away and the journey to him is hazardous. The birds are at first enthusiastic to begin their search, but when they realize how difficult the journey would be they start making excuses. The nightingale, for example, cannot leave his beloved; the hawk is satisfied with his position at court waiting on earthly kings; the finch is too afraid even to set out and so on. The hoopoe counters that each of their desires and fears are mistaken. The group flies a little way, formally adopts the hoopoe as its leader and then decides to ask a series of question before proceeding. These questions are answered by illustrative. anecdotes. The journey through the seven valleys is quickly dealt with and the birds arrive at the court of the simorgh. They finally find that the *simorgh* they have sought is none other than themselves.

The hoopoe in Attar's poem is presented as the birds' guide and leader. He is therefore the equivalent of a sheikh leading a group of religious adepts along their path. Indeed it is remarkable how close Attar's poem is in technique to medieval European classics. Like Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, it is a group of stories bound together by the convention of a pilgrimage and as in Chaucer's work the convention allows the author to present a panorama of contemporary society. In The Conference of Birds, as in a great deal of Sufi poetry, the true idol to be destroyed is the self.

In The Conference of Birds by Farid ud-Din Attar, the soul has to muster its determination in any way it can by

joining a conference of like-minded seekers, by trusting the guidance of one who has made the journey already (the hoopoe). The soul has no choice: it must make the journey, weather slowly or swiftly, courageously or cowardly. It is the nature of the soul to seek its eternal home. It is the nature of each bird to seek 'this wondrous being' the *simurgh*.

It gives us a mystical insight that personal self isn't of much real worth. What is valuable is the beloved's presence within us and that presence isn't threatened by the death of the body. Attar's Manteq al Tair (Conference of the Birds) where the seven valleys traversed by the birds of the quest are: search, love, mystic apprehension, detachment/independence, unity, bewilderment and fulfillment in Annihilation. The purpose of the discipline is to achieve purification. The aspirant has to purify his *nafs* i.e., his self from the thoughts and desires of the natural man, and substitute these with love (Mahabba); then he must be cast into flames of passion (ishq) to emerge in the state of union (Wusla) with transmutation of self (Fana) through the gifts of dazzlement and wonder (haira) to everlastingness (baqa).

Thus we come to the conclusion that art or literature should be first a pattern of beauty and then a preserver of philosophy. But it must be borne in mind that it should not be entirely devoid of philosophy. Some sort of philosophy it must embody. *Gitanjali* of Tagore is immortal as a work of art, because its songs are saturated with a divinity that is within and without the poet. The poem has been conceived in an optimistic way and enkindles the spirit of freedom, love and devotion in the kindred souls. Milton was treading the right path when he was building his lofty rhyme round his Taskmaster. He justifies the ways of God to man.

Shelley's immortal line, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind," has rendered more good to mankind than millions of maunds of gold could. The message of optimism of this verse invigorates the sad and melancholy heart as nothing else does. The pessimism of Matthew Arnold and Thomas Hardy is depressing and leads to a sense of frustration and disillusionment in life. But their pessimism is highly enticing or gripping because beauty, charm, loveliness and harmony are also interwoven in it.

References

1. Darbandi Afghan, Davis Dick, Trans. The Conference of the Birds, Attar Farid-ud-din, London: Penguin, 1984.
2. Aristotle, Poetics
3. Goodman. W.R, Quintessence of literary Essays, Doaba House, New Delhi.

(The author is Assistant Professor, English, in Islamia College of Science and Commerce, Srinagar.)

Short Stories

ONE LIFE, FOUR FACETS

Prof Lalit Magotra
Translated from Dogri by Suman Sharma

• Facet One - Dev Vrat

My mood is off since morning and I am not going home. I know there's nothing here for me, but I don't want to go home either. Today happens to be a Satuday. Chetan Uncle must have come to our home. He would be playing chess with Papa at this time. Mom would have placed two hot cups of tea by their side - one with much sugar for Papa and the other without sugar and milk for Chetan Uncle - he takes black tea.

I fail to understand how on earth Uncle Chetan has been able to develop such close friendship with Papa, and in such a short period. Papa had never before played chess with such keen interest. It has now become his latest fad and on Saturday mornings he waits eagerly for Chetan Uncle's visit. He hugs him on his arrival and Mom prepares special dishes to his liking.

You can never say why you don't like certain people. To tell you why I dislike him is not only difficult but impossible for me. Being the only son of my parents perhaps has made me egoistic. I don't like anyone intruding into the close bond that exists between the three of us. We

three of the family are so close to each other that we understand most of the things without having to talk about them. I think Chetan Uncle's too frequent visits to our home and his staying with us for long hours will do us no good. Well, whatever it is, I want to avoid being home when he is there. What tests my patience is his show of affection for me. I bow to his feet and he hugs me. Frequently, he tries even to kiss me as well. If I try to wriggle out of his grasp, he kisses my head. How I detest being hugged and kissed by him!

It is possible that my dislike for Chetan Uncle is because he and Papa are so different in their body-shapes and nature. Papa is a roly-poly man of a shiny pate and open nature. He can neither be showy nor discreet in what he does. Talking and laughing are in his nature. Uncle Chetan on the other hand is tall and handsome. He maintains a slim and trim body even at his age. His full head of neat, salt-and-pepper hair and smart dressing-style make him look like he is always going to a party. I don't know why that puts me off. Perhaps, if you don't like someone, you don't like anything about him.

To talk to Papa is to talk to a friend. But talking to Chetan Uncle is a different matter. His words are measured. Any time that he talks to me, it is going to be a lecture for me to concentrate on my studies and my career. Once or twice he even brought me career guides. Why would I care to open such books? Chetan Uncle gets on my nerves. Our Saturdays end up on arguments between me and my parents when at last he decides to leave after long hours, late in the evening. My attitude towards Chetan Uncle is not hidden from Mom's keen eyes. She told me two-three times that all elders should be respected and I tried to laugh the matter off, taking care not to give her any

offence.

It is evening now. Chetan Uncle would be staying back till dinner, I know. But how long can I wander about purposelessly like this? I must go home now.

Facet Two - Chetan

I had almost forgotten that phase of my life. That stormy kind of relationship with Parvati was nothing more than a natural spurt in the springtide, I thought. After my marriage I wanted to get rid of her memories altogether, but that was not to be.

As my wife Kusha's nature opened up before me layer by layer, and the strings of our relationship got strained, so did the incidents and things relating to my relation with Parvati revive in my mind in all their freshness. Kusha took to holding me responsible for each and every mistake and shortcoming in our life. Our relationship came to a brink. We fought if I replied back to a vituperative attack of hers, and we fought more if I chose to keep quiet. I feared those times the most when it was she who had committed a wrong. My effort would be that I should not make her aware of her mistake; but she on such occasions would remind me of some long forgotten mistake or an oversight on my part and start fighting with me. These confrontations with Kusha reminded me of Parvati. I fondly remembered my days with her and her total submission to me. I keenly felt the misfortune of having lost her love, which, with a small effort on my part, could have been mine for ever. If only I had the gumption, I won't have lost her and my life would have taken a different meaning altogether.

Taking divorce from Kusha makes a long and painful story, but I never felt bad on my separation from her.

Perhaps it was good for Kusha too. Well, late in the day as it was, it did bring some normalcy in my life at last. But Parvati I could not forget even then. The feeling of having lost something precious in my life was always with me.

Then there was a chance for me to get a transfer to the company's Indore factory. I showed some inclination and was immediately transferred there.

I happened to go four-five times to a store from which Karan also bought groceries for his home. One day when we both were standing at the payment counter, Karan was surprised to hear a Dogri phrase from me and asked whether I hailed from Jammu. Upon receiving my confirmation, he told me that he too had a very special connection with Jammu - his in-laws were in that city. We got acquainted, he insisted that I visited his family and that was how I reached his home.

Poor Karan was not aware that my visit to that store had not been accidental, nor had the Dogri phrase escaped from my mouth unintentionally. I had managed all this so as to reach Parvati. But I was apprehensive also of how Parvati would react on seeing me.

Indeed, she had grown pale on my sight and at that moment I felt my apprehension had not been misplaced. But she had handled the situation quickly.

Like a deft housewife, Parvati made me - now her husband's guest - feel at home, offering me tea and asking me after my health. On being told that I was currently serving in Indore, she expressed happiness as well. Thus was set my routine of visiting her home. A look at the chess board and chessmen and I knew that Karan was fond of the game. Chess offered me a good excuse to visit her home on Saturdays and spend there some time playing with

Karan.

Now I spent all the week-days eagerly waiting for Saturday. It was as if I were ever thirsty and my thirst increased on mere anticipation of a spring of pristine cold water.

It is possible that, initially, I might have felt hesitant to go regularly to that house. But Karan's fondness for the game, his keen wait for me and his warm welcome on my arrival were sufficient to remove my hesitation. Karan turned out to be a very simple person. He laughed when he won and he laughed the louder when he had lost.

Before my visits to that house, I did not have any information about Dev Vrat. Seeing the boy I was surprised and happy too. There are some boys and girls which make you happy just by looking at them. Dev Vrat was one such boy. I had been in search only of Parvati's proximity; now I yearned to see Dev Vrat also. But I don't know why he kept his distance from me. That made me feel bad.

Finding Parvati close to me, my longing to get yet closer to her forced me to do something that was not proper. The firmness with which Parvati deterred me was no less than a severe rebuke. I was disheartened for many days but on the Saturday that followed I was at her place yet again. Parvati of course did not show any change in her demeanour. Everything about her was as it had been earlier.

Now I go to their home every Saturday without fail. I know Parvati does not love me, but I feel great joy looking at her relaxing, walking, working and talking. Karan's guffaws also sound full of friendliness towards me.

I find satisfaction on seeing Dev Vrat too. I understand that I don't have any right to be a part of that household; but at this stage in my life, if my heart-strings are pulled, they are pulled towards that house. On several occasions have I seriously considered the propriety of my visiting them. Should I be mixing my discordant voice in the sweet symphony of that family? But all my reasoning fails before my inordinate desire to be near Parvati. There is nowhere else for me to go except that household.

- **Facet Three - Parvati**

I have everything that a person may desire in life: a happy-go-lucky husband who loves me with all his heart and takes care of the littlest of my said and unsaid needs; and a strapping son whose youthful energy lights up our lives inside and out. It is in this effulgence, which carries with it the fragrance of our mutual love and trust, that we three live our happy lives.

In spite of all this, I carry in my heart a dark secret, a secret that quite often comes out from within the deep recesses of my heart, only to remind me that it is always there within and around me, never to be lost sight of.

I cannot share this awesome secret even with the two closest men in my life - my husband, Karan and Dev Vrat, my son. That pains me every passing moment of my life. Quite often I have a mind to tell Karan, but then I become afraid. Isn't it strange that in spite of all the mutual trust that exists between us, I am apprehensive of my husband's reaction? Are our seemingly strong relations of trust and confidence built on a foundation of sand that a mere gust of the wind from my past is enough to topple them?

To have a life-partner like Karan has been my good luck. It appears that it is in his nature to adopt everyone as

his own. But I become afraid seeing the depth of his affection for Dev Vrat. It frightens me to think what would happen if for some reason a crack develops in their relation.

Dev Vrat also gives him his love in equal measure. I can't help laughing at the the memory of all those funny tricks that Karan played to tickle Dev Vrat when he was small.

One night Karan woke me up and told me in a serious vein that he wanted to talk to me about our relationship. Seeing a seriousness on his otherwise laughing face made me apprehensive. The ghost which had been buried long in my mind's soil was waking up. I said to him with mounting anxiety, "Please say it." He smiled and giving me a close hug said, "I want to thank you. You are a boon-bestowing goddess who has given me a son like Dev Vrat. I tender many many thanks to you." Because of his uncomplicated nature, Karan to me is more a friend than a husband. Living with him has straightened up many a twists in my life and washed away all the clutter in me.

Karan had a strong desire to give Dev Vrat a sibling to bear him company. When we did not have another child even after six or seven years of Dev Vrat's birth, he suggested that we both have a medical check up to know what the wrong was. I trembled with fear at his suggestion, knowing well what would be the outcome. I said, "When we already have a child where is the need to go for one more?" The matter had rested at that. Then I thought it was forgotten. Quite many years passed like this. The life in its beauty flowed smoothly like the mellifluous notes of some raga.

Then one day Karan came home bringing along Chetan with him. The dark secret that had lain entrenched

under the layers of my mind sprang up suddenly like some fiery-eyed Ghori baba or a fearsome ghost from my past.

In his usual joking manner, Karan introduced Chetan as an imp from my land. For a while the ghost that had come from inside me took firm hold over me. Karan said, "Madam ji, would you allow him to come inside or keep blocking his passage standing like that on the door?

Chetan bid me Namaste with folded hands. Perhaps he wanted to show that we were strangers. But I had taken a decision in those few moments and in an excessively normal way asked him, "What brings you here?"

A bit surprised Karan had asked us with a smile, "Then you know each other?"

I had said, "Oh yes, we lived in the same neighbourhood." Chetan's was a half-truth however. "But," he had said to Karan, "much before your marriage we had shifted from that place."

Karan had disposed of the matter with a guffaw, "Then I was right to bring him along."

Chetan's arrival in my house was like a ruffle created in the still waters of a lake by the falling of a stone. But it was just a ruffle indeed, limited only to the surface, because the lake was considerably deep.

What were those moments like which bore that dark secret, the burden of which I am still bound to carry around? It is an irony of fate that from those very fateful moments has sprung the fountain of happiness in my life and Karan's - the fountain of happiness which gives to this day a special meaning to the lives of us both.

A window in my life had opened up that had been

closed for all of twenty years. My family had settled my marriage with Karan and the wedding date too had been fixed. But in my heart I had decided on someone else. I conveyed it to my mother. For her it was a big problem. The preparations for the wedding were in full swing. But Mother made bold to break the news to Father nonetheless. Taking it as a juvenile fancy of my mind, Father gave me a piece of his mind. He made me understand that if I was bent upon making him a laughing stock in the society in this manner, then I should better be prepared to face the worst of him. I became despondent from every side. No one bothered about my happiness, it seemed to me, they all wanted to be free after acquitting the task at hand. Anger raged in my mind like a flame. Burning in that fire of rebellion I took a fateful decision. It was fine that my kin were doing what they had chosen to do; I would also follow, for once, the dictat of my heart. Who could stop me from that? Like an ember flying out of a raging fire, I fell into Chetan's lap and gave to him my all.

Now that I think about those moments I feel Chetan was prepared for this. Rather than showing keenness to establish physical relation with me, he seemed to have been amazed at my temerity. But then everything happened like a storm. What followed was an ominous calm. I felt an emptiness in my heart after the storm had abated - a feeling neither of any gain, nor of a loss. There was no repentence on my deed either. That storm had also blown away with it the longing I once had for Chetan. But if there was no longing for him now, I did not hate him either. It was as if I had opened a new chapter of my life. From that day to this, I never have had a desire for any man than Karan.

Now Chetan started coming regularly to our home.

Karan's old fondness for chess was also revived. He dusted off his chess board and the chessmen. He made a routine with Chetan to come for a game on every Saturday evening. They played late till night and then Chetan had dinner with us. I saw that Karan liked Chetan immensely and told him jokes laughing aloud. Or perhaps, he looked after Chetan because he hailed from the city of Jammu.

In the heart of hearts I did not want Chetan to come to our home. But I did not have much problem with his visits either. The problem lay somewhere else. It could well be a fancy of mine that if anyone saw them minutely he could discern a similarity in the features of both the men, particularly their eyes. Just above the corner of their eyes, both Karan and Chetan had wrinkles such as the Chinese have. In Chetan's case, though, this feature was masked by the tinted reading-glasses that he wore.

Even though Chetan let it show, I am certain he had recognized that Dev Vrat was his own son. I don't know why, but Dev Vrat did not like him.

Quite often my fingers touched Chetan's fingers while I handed to him a glass of water or some such thing. Intially, I did not pay much attention to this but when it happened too often I came to suspect Chetan was doing it wilfully. I didn't like it. Then one day Chetan came to our home. It was neither a Saturday, nor was it his usual time. Both Karan and Dev Vrat were away. I sat him courteously and offered him water. His fingers touched mine again on this occasion. I asked him why he had come. He said with a smile, "Today I was relieved from office work rather early, so I thought of coming here for a small chat. That's all."

Putting on a glove of softness on my cold severity I looked Chetan in his eyes and said, "I advise you to come

here only when Karan is around. Now please sit down and relax. I will make you a cup of tea. You may like to watch tv till Karan arrives."

Ever since that occasion, Chetan has never come to our home at an inappropriate time.

I don't have any misconception about the relationship between Dev Vrat and Chetan. The cause of my son's conception could have been anyone - to me it is of little significance. But Dev Vrat's father is Karan - and that is the absolute truth for me. Aside from Karan, I simply cannot think of any man as Dev Vrat's father. It is a different matter that I want Dev Vrat not to dislike Chetan the way he does. I don't approve of that.

- **Facet Four - Karan**

The first time that I brought Chetan home I observed that Parvati was behaving rather oddly. On any other occasion that we had a guest, Parvati used to welcome him with great warmth. I have always acknowledged her penchant for hospitalily. In greeting Chetan, however, she did not show her usual geniality and friendliness. What surprised me more was that Chetan hailed from Jammu, the same Jammu about which Parvati never tired of talking. In fact Dev Vrat and I used to taunt her about her great love for Jammu.

I felt that Chetan was somehow involved in the questions that had nudged my mind since long, the questions which I had tried to bury deep in my conscious.

It had happened about eleven-twelve years back. When we did not have a second child long after Dev Vrat's birth, I suggested to Parvati that we both go to a doctor for an examination lest some kind of a weakness or a problem

should have cropped up after our son's birth. The way in which she turned down my suggestion furiously had left me amazed, since it was contrary to her usual laid back manner. Nontheless, I went alone for tests without telling Parvati. The reports were astonishing. The doctor opined that I was incapable of fathering a child and that my condition was incurable. It was some kind of a genetic weakness.

It was only natural that a lot many questions should arise in my mind. But I had reached such a deep understanding of Parvati that to doubt her character was to doubt my own integrity. Parvati's conduct, her graciousness and her total dedication to our household did not permit me ever to think lowly of her. If Parvati did not choose to share with me something, then it was really not worth telling me.

Dev Vrat may not be my blood but he has never been any less. Don't the issue-less poeple adopt children and shower upon them the love more than they would have done on their own children? Dev Vrat, in any case, is born of Parvati, that woman whom I love more than anybody else.

The way Parvati behaved on Chetan's arrival opened my third eye which can see the truth behind past events. This eye of mine saw that Parvati is not happy with Chetan's regular visits to our home. That Dev Vrat is Chetan's son, I did not take long to perceive. Chetan's yearning for Parvati and Parvati's total lack of interest in him have also not escaped my third eye.

Parvati thinks the secret that she hides in her bosom is known to no one else, even though Chetan has come to

know that Dev Vrat is his own child. But Chetan too is under an illusion that I am unaware of this. I think perhaps this situation is best for all of us, particularly for Parvati. I also know that for a person like Parvati it is painful to carry the burden of this secret. But, God forbid, if this secret becomes open before me because of her own or someone else's fault, she would feel that she has fallen in my eyes. In such a situation all my assurances are bound to go flat that what has happened in her past does not affect her relationship with me. I will never, and in no circumstance, wish that Parvati should feel degraded. Chetan's visits to this house make no difference to me since I know that there is no place for him in Parvati's mind. And if Chetan finds a modicum of happiness in our home, why should we deprive him of this simple pleasure?

The day, however, he himself decides not to come any more - it is for him to know.

RECALL

Chhatra Pal

Translated from Dogri by Dr Garima Gupta

It had stopped raining on way to the bus stand. It was merely drizzling now. It seemed as if the clouds had rinsed themselves dry and couldn't help dissipating.

He looked at his watch. It was fifty minutes for the bus to leave. Balancing his bag he paid the auto-rickshaw driver and sat on an empty bench near a sill in front of the booking office and began wiping his face. A brisk whiff of breeze swept the twigs and brought them to his feet. He brushed his trousers clean with his handkerchief and began looking at the ticket window where one or two passengers were standing.

To reassure himself he unzipped the bag and ran his hand through all the things in it. Everything was in order. The saree for Gupta Sahib's daughter and rajma (a variety of lentils) for Gupta Sahib himself were kept at the very top. After retirement he had become forgetful. Memory along with health had drained out through the sieve of old age. After the loss of his wife, he, as it was, found nothing worth remembering. The silken thread of memory was gradually slipping away from his hands. At home neither his two daughter-in-laws nor his elder granddaughter would send him out for any errand. After crossing the threshold of the house he would promptly forget the task.

No one in the family was willing to send him to the marriage of Gupta Sahib's only daughter. Anshu, his granddaughter, making fun of his forgetfulness went to the extent of saying to him that "Bau ji, do you remember the location of Gupta Sahib's house lest you wander into somebody else's home. And the gift you've bought for his daughter, don't forget it at home!"

This jest on the part of Anshu had pierced his innermost core though he knew that she was only trying to amuse everyone. He wiped his mind clean of these thoughts and looked at his watch. Ten minutes had passed. Abrol was yet nowhere to be seen. Last night it was mutually agreed that they would reach the bus stand by ten in the morning. He had convinced Abrol with great difficulty to attend the marriage of Gupta Sahib's daughter. As it was, Abrol hardly went anywhere as he suffered from pain in his knees but he had great respect for Gupta Sahib. After his retirement as principal of a Central School, Gupta Sahib had settled down in his ancestral village in Punjab. He and Abrol had retired as well within a span of six month after each other but their correspondence with Gupta Sahib continued.

Suddenly he had a moment of anxiety with the thought what if Abrol cancelled his trip at the eleventh hour...... For a moment he saw all the problems ahead of him but he repeated his resolve and firmed his heart, " If he doesn't come, let him not, I'll go by myself". He tried to recall the last thirty years record of Abrol. He remembered at least four five incidents when Abrol had let him down at the last minute. He, for a moment, felt happy at his memory but the very next instance he felt bad that it is only such useless information that he is able to recall. The useless memories of childhood were stuffed in his brain like palsy

but not the significant information like the telephone number of Abrol so that he could call him from a P.C.O. and ask him about his whereabouts.

Having resolved to travel alone he got up, hung his bag on the shoulder and stood at the far end of a long line of passengers at the ticket window. A few pilgrims on their way to Vaishno Devi shrine were standing ahead of him. Sight of these pilgrims made him queasy inside. The heart seemed to shrink and the brain cells seemed to bloat.

He is simply not able to figure out how it could have happened to him. After many years he had gone to the Vaishno Devi shrine......on foot. He had also acquired an acquaintance with a family from Maharastra. He had reached the Darbar (holy Cave) of the goddess by dusk. He was exhausted. He decided to visit the holy Cave (that houses the deity) in the morning and slept in the dormitory in a blanket. He woke up in the morning, hung his bag on his shoulder and began his journey back. After many years he had had a sound sleep. He also kept hailing the divine mother fervently (Jai Mata Di) on his way back.

On reaching Katra, he met the same Maharastrian family at the bus stand. When Damle Sahib marveled at his quick visit, he almost fainted with the realization that he had returned from Hathi Mattha (a place about two kilometers before the Holy Cave) without ever reaching the Holy Cave. For the very first time in his life he felt like weeping at his forgetfulness. Exhausted, he could not even think of climbing back (almost 13 kilometers) to the holy cave. With a sullen face, he had bought *Prasad* (a blessed eatable got from the Holy Cave) from a shop in Katra itself and returned to Jammu. For years he had kept this incident locked in his heart. But during the last Navratras (nine holy days dedicated to the worship of the divine mother) the

truth came out.

For days it was a butt of joke in his family. Anshu had shared it even with her friends savouring every detail. He was not able to forbid her even once. Deeply troubled he even sought the advice of a renowned doctor. 'Senile Dementia is yet not curable' is the only prescription he got from the doctor quick to wash his hands off him.

Waiting for his turn in the queue, he began deliberating upon his inability to recall. Last few years, not only at home, but outside as well he encountered many such moments when his mind assaulted his very existence. In each instance he felt as if while running the road abruptly ended, as if he is suspended in a void surrounded by nothing but darkness. Several times he had felt as if a thick black curtain suddenly enveloped his mind and he was unable to see beyond it. With the passing of years, the number of such incidents kept increasing in count. Once during the compilation of the voters list, when he forgot his name, he locked himself up in a room and wept incessantly. Abrol had got visiting cards made for him and instructed him strictly to always carry them on his person.

Instinctively his hand reached for his pocket where there were still two or three visiting cards mocking at him. Only two passengers were left ahead of him and the queue behind him had grown. In anticipation of his turn, he took out two hundred rupees notes from his pocket and held them in his hand. When the passenger ahead of him got his ticket and left, he put his hand through the ticket window and said, "Two tickets please"

"Where to sir?" asked the booking clerk respectfully, mindful of his white hair. Before he could reply, it was as if his memory became eclipsed. In one thousandth fraction of a second suddenly all the doors and windows of mind shut

down, as if all the lights had suddenly been turned off. He tried to search every dark nook of his mind, but was only able to stammer out ......"oh, that, that......"

"Say something or else......", said the booking clerk irritably. A young passenger at the back remarked sarcastically, "Tau ji (old man), go home and first ask your family about your destination....move..."

He stood stunned as a stone. Meanwhile, a young boy came up from behind, pushed him aside and put his hand through the ticket window. He felt as if that hand had been put through his heart. A few passengers were laughing at him.

He was overwhelmed with embarrassment. He came and sat down on the bench. His ears were burning with the laughter of the people around him. He tried to recall the name of Gupta Sahib's town, tried to dig his memory hard, but no blüeprint surfaced on the blank black board of his mind.

"Did you get the tickets?" It was the voice of Abrol, panting. "Today my knees were paining badly and I have reached with a lot of difficulty". He threw himself on the bench and kept his bag at his side. Then, looking at his watch, he asked again, "Did you buy the ticket?"

He had regained his poise a little. "I was on my way to buy it......take care of my bag...... I have also reached a few minutes before you." He began to move towards the ticket window. His shoes seemed to be made of steel. Uncertainty had gripped him. A common place name of the town was escaping his memory and teasing him. The stress was making the nerves of his brain taunt. He stood at the end of the queue, behind all the passengers. He ran the horses of his mind, but they seemed to come to a halt, neighing and scratching the earth with their hoofs unwilling to run

further.

For a moment he thought that he should ask Abrol for the name of the destination. But Abrol made fun of his dementia mercilessly; so he could not gather courage to ask him. He felt as if he was standing on hot coals. After spending a few minutes near the queue, he came back to Abrol with an excuse, "Pass me the matchbox". He took the matchbox and lit a cigarette. He was unable to decide if he should go to the ticket window or simply ask Abrol the name of Gupta Sahib's town. He tried to be evasive and asked, "Does the bus go through Gupta Sahib's town?"

Abrol replied irritably, "Only if we are able to get on it, if you get the tickets. Only ten minutes are left for the bus to leave. I hope you are not entertaining any doubt that I will not pay for my fare." Abrol's jest was unpleasant to him. Why his memory had to fail him now. Before reaching the bus stand he had clearly remembered the name of the place. He wished he had carried the invitation card with him. Anshu had reminded him to, as he was stepping out of the house...but he took it otherwise. He felt that she was making fun of his dementia.

He pretended to be fine and asked Abrol, "I hope you are carrying the invitation card with you."

"What's the matter? Do you need to see the address?" Abrol asked bluntly. He was taken aback. How did Abrol know? He found himself unable to answer.

"One can't say anything about you, your memory might just have marched out", said Abrol.

On observing his silence, Abrol looked at him closely and said, "What's wrong friend, you seem troubled. Is it that you have really forgotten the name of Gupta Sahib's town?" and burst into laughing at his own question.

He felt as if this was his chance to ask Abrol forthwith and end his misery.

Instead he blurted out, "On no! I just wanted to confirm the timing of the reception of *barat* (the groom's family and friends)". His reply sounded hollow to himself.

"Then, Sir should go immediately and get the tickets promptly. It is almost time for the bus to leave. Hardly 7-8 minutes are left."

He observed that merely two or three passengers were left in the queue. With heavy steps he joined them. He began searching for a familiar name amidst the list of places written near the ticket counter. He listened closely to the conversations of the other passengers in the hope of hearing a familiar name. Finally only one passenger was left ahead of him. He felt an attack of anxiety. His heartbeat increased and he began to feel as if the ants were crawling all over his hand and feet. He felt that now it had become inevitable for him to ask Abrol for the address.

He saw Abrol massaging his right knee. Each second became loaded. The passenger in front of him had also bought his ticket and left. Now he was left standing alone right in front of the ticket window. There was nobody to rescue him. He tried to focus his entire consciousness on one point. One name still lingered outside his reach, mocking at him. In the hope of a miracle he gradually extended his hand towards the ticket window. He felt as if the one question will at any moment flash like a bullet shattering his very being.

HOMECOMING

Namia Noor

"Two and a half hours," she calculated after a look at her watch. She was flushing and wished only if she could bring down the temperature of the boarding room to what she could bear now. Her neck pain too gave her a tingly head. Uneasy. Flying for sixteen hours had already exhausted her. But there was nothing she could do now. She should have got into a hotel for this night just to get some rest but she didn't want to wait any longer; no longer to see her home, her paradise.

Like that pebble on the bank of a brook, waiting to be weathered down and carried by the stream to silt at the place it belonged to, so that it could provide and give, she waited. Two and a half hours and another forty five minutes of the flight was all the wait now. The two years she was away and the intention of being away for many more had impregnated her heart with something. Something she couldn't recognise. Something that was growing on her, making it darker for her to see what it was. Something that intermittently made her feel like a traitor. Adding to her unease or perhaps... But she had decided, she was staying away for longer, for life maybe and yet waiting to come home.

Only some minutes to land excited her, but there was no one around to share, to talk to, to understand what she felt. She had no access to the social network too, wishing

she had. She wasn't one of those who needed outletting very often but this time she was so filled that she dreaded a breakdown. There were her mountains. Only if they could shrink to be huggable! She longed to touch the granules of the long standing snow, soak in the warmth of its cold. She was home.

The first step on the solid ground sent a charge up her nerves, she felt an unusual upward thrust of her gut. From the runway to the conveyer belt and finally the exit door, she barely could see anything. Her eyes were blurred of fatigue, of stinging cold, of something else. No, not the bus this time! She ran to the taxi stand. She booked a cab. Eight hundred was not much of a cost for her now when she had earned quite a bit. Felt she could have paid anything. The driver approached to carry her baggage. His face extracted that look from her, one that of given to someone own. Her eyes fixed on him as he carried her luggage and loaded it in the car trunk. Thud and she was awakened. She got into the taxi , the driver switched on the engine and they drove off.

The driver was typical of her homeland , inquisitively friendly.

"Are you coming from Delhi?"

"Yes." She didn't bother herself to tell him the whole truth.

"They say it's cold there too."

"It always is in January."

"And foggy?"

"And foggy."

"Why had you gone? To escape the cold here, almost half of Kashmir does that these days. Earlier only the business community and the rich could have the privilege.

The air fare is low too. The other day......"

"I had some work." She cut him sharp. She wanted no distractions. She was keen on looking outside the window, at the shops, roads, the yellow huge municipality dustbins spilling with garbage, the trees, the mountains, the puddles, and most of all the people. She didn't want to miss on anything which made her turn her head so often as if in search of something.

Crossing the city, the driver turned the vehicle to Foreshore-Boulevard. "Through the downtown was a shorter distance?"

"Yes madam."

"I am asking why this route?" she sounded irritated.

"Its Friday madam." He replied with a surprised look on his face.

"But the..." She ate her words comprehending what he meant. The year she left an uprising had taken place. Since, she had kept in touch with local news and of things media concealed, she was updated everytime she phoned a friend or family. The fervor had very much died out within these couple of years but every Friday after noon prayers a 'ceremonial' protest was held. At the touch of this, her thoughts shifted from the beauty of this place to its pains, bruises, wounds and suffering.

The stream of her thought was brought to a halt when the driver pulled over the car. She was saddened at the sight of those three cars before theirs. One by one, that uniformed man knocked at the window, checked the credentials of the driver or someone in the vehicle and let them go. It was their turn now. His handlebar moustache gave him a monstrous look. The driver very innocently handed over his car papers and his identity card. After

going through all he fixed a fiery gaze on the driver, as if angry for not giving him a reason to act. He handed back the documents and they drove off. Having grown up to all this, she had lived in this place for the twenty-three years. These uniforms, loaded vehicles, guns pointing out of turrets of the camouflaged trucks were nothing weird to her. All of this used to merge in the usual roadside view. But now having lived at a place where you could hardly point a policeman on road, the sight of an armed man within every half a kilometer was an eyesore. A stinging, distressing phenomenon.

The rest of the drive was uninterrupted. At home relatives and friends had gathered for her welcome. She was hugged tightly, kissed many times, love and tears flowed together. Her mother hadn't come out to receive her. Her eyes searched for her in the crowd. She knew it was her decision of going back that made her do so. Knowing that she would melt when she saw her daughter, she ran indoors, straight to the kitchen and stayed at the door for a while watching her cooking. Her mother didn't realize. She ran to her and hugged her from the back. Being a typical mother, she couldn't hold any longer and turned back to return her embrace. Everything was well now. But she knew that mother would bother her again with the issue of her marriage. She could still breathe free till that series of persuasions, complaints, comparisons and arguments started off.

For another couple of days the house was thronged with guests, the people who had come to see the favourite girl of the family. She was happy entertaining everyone, giving away small gifts she'd got for them. Her favourite food was cooked and the smell of *kehwa* lingered. All the rooms were crowded and echoed with chats and giggles.

She sensed a strange contentment inside her.

Sunday evening when everyone left for their homes and the house fell silent, that uneasiness returned to her. She was up all night. At dawn on hearing the *Adhaan* she got up, did her ablutions and spread the prayer rug. "Was one *Namaz* offered in her room in these two years?" She shook her head and with it all the thoughts off. She said her intentions began her prayers. Paying salaams to guardian angels she finished. Involuntarily she was driven to prostrate again. Her mind was devoid of any thoughts, yet when her forehead touched the ground two drops of brine ran down her nose, both soaking into the rug at one point, where the color got deeper.

At breakfast it was finally the 'just family' time. There were interviews and discussions about work done and to do, at home and out there. There was talking about studies, conflicts, business, movies, cricket. There were talks about themselves other people when Amir was mentioned. Amir was one of her first cousins but not just one of them. He was special to her, a blend of a brother and friend in just perfect proportions. She immediately realized that he hadn't come. "Amir *bhai* didn't visit. Doesn't he know I'm home?"

"Yes. He's just very busy with some project . He called up early morning, asked for you but you were upstairs. I forgot to tell you." Her mother replied scowling. She had never liked the association.

She gulped down what she wanted to say, remembering all her prior explanations had landed somewhere in the waste. She headed to the phone, picked it up and dialed the number. And straight as someone picked up she blurted out, "Where are you? Why didn't you come?" A clear loud laugh could be overheard in the silence of the room. After a few minutes of conversation he offered her

to come with him for some data collection the next day. "And where will we be going?"

"Siahghar. An unknown village of your State. Your pen will get a lot of stories there."

"Count me in."

Amir had been working with an international non-governmental organization helping people in conflict areas and this was how he'd known much of unknown.

It was seven in the morning and a vehicle was already honking outside her house with three people inside besides the driver. She hustled to the car and as soon as she got in they set off. They were already late. Some introductions were followed by a little talk after which it grew quiet. She leaned her head on the window pane. The beauty of her paradise glided past and she sat there unmoved and still.

The car couldn't go beyond a certain point. The road was bad. They had to walk through the village. She slung her camera on the neck and walked. They went through the bare dirt alleys separating the single room mud huts. The intermittent addresses from the company were an intrusion to her. She was lost in the faces of the people loitering or busying around, as if trying to recognize them, defining their place in her lives. Her wandering sight was then suddenly caught by a small girl who was smiling at her and unconsciously biting on one of the corners of her head scarf. She was wonderfully fair and pink in her apple cheeks. The contrast of her ebony hair that showed beneath her scarf gave her a beauty she had never seen. She strangely felt that the mark left by the tear that had run down her face was her mark. It made that child belong to her. There was some part of her in her.

"What are you staring at? We have work and we have to get home early too. You don't want your mother to let

me in your home again?" came a shout.

"Yes, I'm coming." She clicked her picture, returned the smile (which prompted a shy giggle from her) and hesitantly went along.

They walked another half a mile before stopping at a house. The door they knocked at was out of one hinge, the panel had three holes in it and the half length of the edge chipped off.

She chose to stay out and look around while Amir and others went in for the interview with the woman who lived there. She was tired and sat down on the doorstep. She could hear the woman there. Her sobbing made half of what she spoke unintelligible.

"......he used to go to the city to look for work......we had a hand to mouth existence in his presence too.I have to send my girl to labour in the fields..."

A girl in her adolescence came out of the door interrupting the eavesdropper carrying a copper tumbler in her hand with something steaming. The hospitality was refused in agitation. The girl went inside without speaking a word. She tuned in again.

"We were too scared to open the door. They fired bullets first and later some one broke the door open and all the berserk monsters barged in. They were too many for our house. There he lay, motionless before me and I could do nothing......This one has been mute since......"

She lost all conscious control of her body, she walked in not feeling her legs. Something had broken inside her and released some other thing. In the dark of the room her eyes caught the sight of the girl in her camera roll, sitting in her mother's lap, biting on the end of her headscarf, fresh tears on her cheeks. Her eyes were blurred, once again, of

fatigue, of stinging cold and of something else. The girl looked back at her and smiled instantly, 'face still wet. She clicked another picture of her, smiling back. Later she realized she had seen nothing else in the house except that face.

She retruned home when night had already fallen.

"I wont eat tonight."

She got straight into bed and fell asleep.

In the morning she dialed a number on the phone, put it to her ear and spoke, "I have called for my visa cancellation..."

She knew she could in no way lessen the sufferings of her people and probably never suffer like them. She had just chosen to stay with them.

SHORTAGE CASE

Shalini Rana

Shilpa opened the gate and Rahul pushed the back-gear and drew the grey Alto out-of-the-house onto the main road. Shilpa closed the gate and occupied her seat. She closed the door. Their daily quota of fight resumed.

"Enough is enough I am fed up with this small matchbox car," fumed Rahul.

"O, com'n we're not in a position to buy Renault Duster until we clear off the Home Loan," Shilpa showed her wisonomics.

"You don't understand what social status means. You are a born 'Cattle Class' girl."

"You don't know how embarrassed I feel in front of my hi-fi colleagues". The grey Alto and Shilpa had become habitual of Rahul's tantrums and the three of them reached the main bus-stand. The cacophony, blaring of horns welcomed her. Shilpa stepped out and rushed to catch her green-colored superfast bus for kathua. The conductor had already seen her approaching with huffs and puffs and signaled the driver to slow down for Madamjee. Shilpa grabbed the handle and reached to her fixed seat no-4. Prof. Gurpreet greeted her with a smile.

"Hi,"

" O, hi,"

"Late ,again". Yah! "Your husband came to drop

you?". Yah. How lucky you are! Your hubby is so caring. God has given you everything.

This was another daily soap opera dialogue which Shilpa had to tolerate from the forty-year old spinster Prof Gurpreet whom she had *sobriquetted* as Miss Comparative Studies. Prof. Shilpa sometimes felt that her university should open a department of comparative studies where Professors like Miss Gurpreet should be appointed as she was apt in comparisons in all areas, health, wealth, families of one with the other.

The superfast bus zoomed at a super speed and she covered the distance of hundred kilo mitres from Jammu to Kathua in two hours. This bus saved their time but it didn't spare their joints which shook with every turn the bus took. Both of them rushed and Prof. Shilpa straight away went to her class. The already haggard Prof. Shilpa faced a jam-packed class of 150 students.

"Indians breed like pigs". The government had opened sixty new colleges but even these new colleges were over-crowded within five years of their inauguration. In order to keep 150 mouths shut, she shouted, "Good mooornining , Siiillence...... attend to your roll call pleeease'.

Few roll numbers were absent. Despite the crowd and suffocation she loved her class and her class loved her back. They were not just roll numbers for her but 150 living souls with 300 curious eyes daily looking at her for some new knowledge, wisdom and light.

The young teenage curious faces daily inspired her to perform her duty with energy. After the class, Shilpa used to feel tired physically but mentally she would be recharged. The questions which the students asked showed their curiosity.

"Ramesh Ji, Ramesh Ji," Prof. Shilpa sank in the sofa of the staff room while calling the peon. The peon brought a glass of water.

"Excuse me Ma'm," a feeble voice called her. She held the glass in her hand.

"Yes, "what do you want?" "Ma'm," the boy slipped a receipt. "Ma'm, the Office Assistant is not issuing my Examination Roll no. slip. I fall in shortage case."

Good, so finally you have come. Why didn't you come to the college? In fact, I'm seeing you for the first time. Though, I teach so many students in a day but I remember their faces." Beta, was there any serious problem;

The boy stood like a culprit in mourning. No maam, maam no. Please Mam, Mam please.

"Please, please is not enough. Go now."

The boy didn't move.

"Have you appeared in the Internal Tests?" She always gave a chance to culprits.

"Yes, Mam." The boy replied.

"Ramesh Ji, Ramesh Ji,"

"Aan Ji Madam Ji."

"Take these keys and bring the first year Attendance Register from my almirah." The register was brought to her.

"What's your Roll Number".

"270, Ma'm. Maam, 270."

"Okay."

Oh my God! Look! You have not attended even a single lecture. She spread the register on the table. Look at your Roll Number, all the columns are blank. See, July, August, September, October, November, December,

January and February and now you are showing your face so bravely. This is not done, Beta.

The boy stood silent staring at his own torn chappals.

Prof. Shilpa also scanned the boy from head to toe.

"Were you ill?" she softened her tone. No, Mam. Mam no."

"Was there any tragedy at home?"

"No Mam, Mam no."

"Are you doing some job?"

"No mam, Mam no."

"Do you come from border area?"

"No, Ma'm."

"No mam, No mam. There must be some reason. Tell me what stopped you from coming to the college even for a single day." There was silence for next five minutes.

"Mam, I didn't have the bus fare to come to the college".

"I can't believe this! The government buses charge only three rupees for one side from students. You mean to say you didn't have six rupees a day for coming to the college."

"No, Maam, Maam no, no, Maam."

"Then how did you get your books? How do you study?"

"Maam, I borrowed books from my seniors."

"It's a white lie." She had tolerated enough. You can go now." She knew these days students are wanderers, truants and bunkers.

"Go away from here."

The boy's eyes had little water and he said again, "No

Maam, Maam." There was a lump in his throat and he went outside the staff room.

"Ramesh Ji, Ramesh Ji," "Chaa le aao". (Bring tea).Ugh! Her head was aching now. What has happened to today's generation? Not an iota of honesty. She wasn't a strict teacher but this was too much. She had delivered 142 lectures in section- A of B.sc. Ist year and not a single class had he attended, Strange. While her interior monologue was on she searched her record file of Internal Assessment. Her gel pen searched the blocks containing roll numbers and she stopped at roll number 270.

"Oh my God!" He had appeared in both the tests. And Lo! What!

He had scored nine out of ten in both the Internal Tests. It was the highest score. Unbelievable! She again checked thoroughly. Yes it was the record of Section A only of BSc- Part I.

"Very strange," she thought. She remembered the lump in his throat. Her heart beat faster than usual.

"Ramesh Ji, Ramesh Ji,"

Aan Ji Madam ji. Tus local ho, anji, Ai jo muda ayeda ha aida pata kariyo, kis graan da aye, kis family daa hai".

Ramesh Ji was a local daily wager he knew Dogri language only.

Prof. Shilpa directed him to find out the boy who had just left the staffroom.

Efficient Ramesh ji brought the investigative news.

MadamJi, bada gareeb muda hai". Badi aalt kharab hai. Aida paiyo half-mental hai. Panj chey pra payenh hain, ai sabtoon vada ay. Ai tay lookan diyan gaona charda ay.

(This guy is very poor. His condition is wretched. His

father is half-mental. They are 5-6 brothers and sisters. He is the eldest. He earns a living by grazing the cattle of others in the village.)

Prof. Shilpa was stunned. After three minutes, she gathered her senses and ordered. *Tolay jaao, tay usi tupi ye lai aao, oh kalej dey under hi hona hai.*

(Go and find him, he must be in the college only.)

Ramesh ji moved outside swiftly. He was no lesser than a James Bond. Shilpa stared at the two columns 9+9=18 out of 20.

She remembered the lump in the throat.

She felt like crying loudly. Oh! My poor boy! Poor countrymen! My poor half-mental breeders. Six rupees a day! Such a big amount. No books, no money, such love for studies. Such a brilliant performance without even attending a single class.

My lad, my poor boy in coarse clothes. She prayed, "Oh God! Please send him back, I was about to commit a sin of spoiling someone's career. I was just doing my duty; I am not an "antaryami" like you. Please forgive me God."

"Madam ji, *Aiiyah muda.*" (The boy is back) Ramesh ji said. "Beta'" she went close to him. She enquired about his family. The information matched with Ramesh ji's investigation. All she could say was " How sad !" Beta give me your receipt. She wrote, "Shortage cleared." No objection in issuing roll no. slip of Roll no-270. She marked her signature. "Beta do you need books." The boy nodded. She took out text books, grammar books, reference-books, sample question-papers, photo- stated notes. And gave it to the boy. "Beta, do you need money."

"No Maam. Maam, no."

"I'll be happy if I'll be of any help to you."

"No, Maam, Maam, no, no, Maam!"

She smiled, "Okay you seem to be a hard working intelligent guy, well done, keep it up and if you need any kind of help, please do come to me. Okay.?"

"Thank you, maam, Maam, thank you."

The boy was relieved and went away staring at his feet.

Prof. Shilpa finished the day's work and boarded the superfast bus. Her bones and joints danced and jerked with super speed of the bus. It was 6 O'clock in the evening. At jewel-chowk Bus Stand, Rahul was waiting in his grey Alto with a long face. Shilpa occupied her seat .Rahul passed a glaring brochure of Renault Duster towards her.

"See, I brought it today from the showroom.Look, which color of Renault Duster do you suggest," Rahul beamed.

She flipped through the shiny glazed brochure.

She remembered the lump in the throat.

Poetry

VAAKHS

Lal Ded

Translated from Kashmiri by Prof G R Malik

1

A thousand times I asked my Guru,
"How shall we name the Nameless One?"
I asked and asked, felt tired and weary:
Nothing then seemed to yield up something.

2

The ties of my candy burden are loosened,
My back bent double, how now to carry the load!
My Guru's precept, neglected, smarts like a blister
Now that I have turned into a shepherdless flock.

3

I tamed my self by slow degrees,
Then the lamp lit up and I knew my essence;
I wafted my inner light abroad
Catching it up in darkness lost.

4

Stirred by love I, Lalla left my home
To search for Him day in, day out;
But lo! The wonder I saw the Pundit at my home
On a blessed and auspicious hour of illumination

5

It is we who were and shall ever be,
It is we who have ever moved around.
Shiva shall ever dissolve and reappear
As the sun shall ever rise and set.

6

Who shall die? Whom shall they kill?
Whom shall they kill and who shall die?
One who clings to dust and sinks in the world,
He shall, die, yes, he shall be killed.

7

In the last watch of the moonlit night, I broke my carefree self in;
I nursed my pain for the love of God;
My Lord I woke up calling Lalla, Lalla:
Having met Him my self was cleared off the ten propensities of sense and action.

8

I made my heart recite the Supreme Name each moment
Reciting myself - hearing myself;
With He is I destroyed I am
And then I reached the abode of light.

9

I lost my self so much that loss itself was lost;
Out of this loss I reverted back to existence;
Then smiling, sporting I knew the Supreme being
Untaught though, I experienced the truth myself.

10

I fondled the fire of love in my lap;
I died and every bit was finished:
In colours I saw the Colourless hidden -
No way was there but to deny 'I am'.

SHRUKHS

Shaikh al-Alam

Translated from Kashmiri by Prof G R Malik

1

The crow keeps on cawing to me sombre forebodings:
Whom shall I tell that my feathers have fallen off in the air,
My horse bogged in waters, my boat stranded on land,
My burden too heavy, to whom shall I entrust it.

2

With a single breath, mountains will resound
And domes will echo taking up the sound.
A plain man will catch a hint
While drumbeats fall flat on perverse ears.

3

Whomsoever Thou givest, none can take away from him,
No (auspicious or inauspicious) timings will matter;
And whomsoever Thou deprivest none can give to him,
No talent, caste or lineage will matter.

4

Awhile I feasted on the balmy dew,
Awhile I saw the blight of frost;
Awhile the black night darkened my view,
Awhile I saw the illuming dawn.

5

Awhile I saw the stream aflow,
Awhile I saw nor bridge nor bank;
Awhile I saw the bush in bloom,
Awhile I saw not rose nor thorn.

6

The burning passionate fire of youth
Fell to the fiery pomegranate fruit;
Satan kindled the haystack of my being
And like a thief I lost my way on the crossing.

7

You merrily dance on the surface of the pit
Oh dear! How does your heart brook this?
You hoard and collect only to leave it back,
How then can you relish your food and drink?

8

I came by the way and returned by the way
And night fell on me in the middle of the embankment.
I searched my pockets and found them empty;
Where shell I get the money to pay the ferry fee?

9

Spring is over and the thrush is mute;
My colourful nightingale is dumb.
Youth has faded and spurned the lure
Of candy, sweets and ghee.

10

Like a spring lost amid wild rocks
You are a saint fallen among thieves.
Like an eagle lost in a crowd of crows
You are a pundit among unlettered boors.

Outside the golden gate

Farooq Nazki
Translated from Urdu by Abid Ahmad

The shaking bodies
Covered in thick fog
Having donned the shroud of half-dead light
Suffered for long
The heat of their senses
In the land of death
Before being sacrificed.

The evening
Ceaselessly rubbed its forehead on the half-lit roads
While trembling
And standing for long
Near the cold niche
Before changing into a sad night.

The moon
In the deep blue ocean of the sky
From the royal galaxy of the stars

Threw light for long
On the land of death.

No shadow or silhouette from grave to grave
Missing milestones from step to step.
The doors of the houses
Abandoned by the inmates
Were waiting for long
With their nameplates
But there was no knock or creak.

Here
In the darkness of the silent city
The fearful bodies
In the changing angles of ecstasy
knotted, brimmed, dispersed, reclaimed
And
While covered in fog
Walking past the light
Branch to branch
Are breathing
Under the shadow of guillotine.

DRESS

Adil Raza Mansoori
Translated from Urdu by Abid Ahmad

Hanging the day
On the peg,
I pulled down the night
From the hanger.
Day and night
Have become worn out
No longer fit to wear.
What should be the dress
For the next journey?

The day our children will grow up

Champa Sharma

Translated from the Dogri by Chetan Sharma

A day will come when our children will grow up
Will read and write and become wise
Will find a job and then get married
Making parents feel pride in their achievements
That day will be a day of blessing
But friends, a new era will unfold

Then soon these young birds will fly away
And occupy a new place of dwelling
Will send their regards from afar
And share their new addresses
Will tell parents to keep writing letters
And advise them for timely meals and rest
But parents' thoughts will remain attached
And long for a reunion with them

No doubt the meetings will be rare
The kitchen will be spic and span
No utensil left out of place
Ladle and spoon will remain unused
No reason to cook special dishes
Kitchen pipes will not get blocked
The sink will also remain pristine
Floor will always be squeaky clean
What's the use of scrubbing it
When there will be no speck of dirt

The car will stand quietly in a corner
And the garage will remain uncluttered
You won't see a tricycle left upside down
And neither any dolls, games left asunder
Nor hammer, screwdriver and wires
There won't be any posters lying around
Neither any broken toasters
Stumbling and falling will yield no help

For whom every stranger was an uncle or aunty
And often received a loud scolding
One who teased me but laughed himself instead
And used to run away when I chased him
Whose eyes could tell when he was mischievous
And would reveal the whole secret in an instant

When he sheds tears with a pouty face
That endearing image remains entrenched in my heart
When will I get to witness such captivating moments next

I won't venture out alone in my car
I may find something long lost inside it
Something in a corner of the backseat
That will bring a rush of memories and make me weak
Small glass bottles with little fingerprints
That are not rolled over and over anymore
There won't be anyone sticking their neck out
And the inside of the car will be neither cool nor hot
No one will come running to sit in my lap

Telephone will ring at the right volume
No one will run to pick it up eagerly
Who will enjoy all the candies
The ants will not have a field day anymore
No more wrong numbers will be dialed
Who will entertain the audiences?
Soon after returning from the temple
And listening to the doorbell ring
Won't be able to answer the door with bare

head

After resisting and much shirking
Who will recite the arithmetic tables daily?
Who will get enticed at the prospect of gifts?
And who will behave stubbornly at every excuse
Who will ask for money for picnic?
And then take whatever they can get
Who will show me innocent tantrums
And plead for new shoes unceasingly
And not rest until their wish is granted

Who will ask for dolls and their costumes
And hide behind doors in protest
One who likes the special sweet Kud-patisa
And excitedly participate in devipooja
One who dances ebulliently and vigorously
And steals laughter from all around
One who won't take a single bite in a bad mood
And still get all her wishes fulfilled
How can a day be spent without that child

Rano grew up to be a beautiful girl
Did not realize how quickly she grew up
And soon it was time for her marriage
And a time to separate from us to live a new life

Not long ago she used to learn to cook rotis
While her school was in recess for summer
The cow and the grass that Rano heeded
Will remind me of her when she won't be near
While eating food in my plate
The tears will drop in one by one

Eid and Diwali will seem tasteless
When children won't be near us
Who will ask for fireworks and sparklers?
Who will ask for threads on Rakhi
With no fear of trepidation
Who will ask for colorful kites
And climb on rooftops to duel with other kiteflyers
On Rakhi, the heart will miss them greatly

Wiping their medals and awards daily
Cleaning those cassettes that hold their favourites
Looking at the small box that holds
Coins from countries near and far
Tickets to places travelled in past
Preserved copies of them all
Looking at photo of young Vikas
Taking bath in a tub innocently

Sleeping tight despite the rooster's wake-up call
For whom should we build paper planes
And act it out as if those planes take-off
Who will ask for paper boats
And try to sail it in a water tub
Clap when the boat floats on water
And tear more paper in excitement
Who will thread the kites anymore
And massage the feet in anticipation
Heaven will not provide such solace

Children may go live in foreign lands
But I will always remain an Indian
Not once or twice but in all my births
This is the land of my mother and aunts
All my relatives and all my well-wishers
The mountains, forests, rivers and streams
Call out to me in sincere pleasant tones
I wouldn't be able to survive without them

They will post congratulatory messages
And request parents to come and visit them
Days of writing letters are over
Instead telephone has taken over
But telephones have a disadvantage
You can only talk for a limited time

Every acquaintance that I meet
Asks about children and when they will meet
The wait for a meeting will carry on

Parents too have been a bit responsible
Always stressed on working good jobs
Pushed children to keep improving
And work in high paid plush jobs
They sent the children across seven seas
To improve upon their lot
Children too now have their families
A different lifestyle and point of view
They don't want to come back home

Everyone remembers their homeland at sometime
Whenever they suffer in mental anguish
They won't find any solace in distress
Without the shoulder of parents or relatives to lean on
Surrounded by strangers and acquaintances
Seldom they find unconditional support
If whenever they fall sick
Or feel broken in spirit
In whose lap will they keep their head

And whose healing touch will give them peace
People will get engaged and married
Who will go to wish them well
Box of sweets will remain untouched
And keep building up in a pile
Mental anxiety will not go away
And will remain entrapped between four walls
Who will guess our helplessness
Distance will seem to increase by the day
And slowly the relations will get strained

British Pounds will not quench thirst
Neither will American Dollars entertain us
What use is a Russian Rouble in sickness
These won't serve us in time of need
There won't be any charm in life
And no one will have time for us
Why don't you come and sit beside me for a few minutes
Why don't you share your pain and sadness
Loneliness will seem overwhelming

I don't enjoy these fairs and festivals
What good is the money and wealth
I feel like I must give it all away
To temples, mosques, churches and gurudwaras
Set myself free from worldly attachments

And break all chains of bondage
Land and property is another disease
Who will watch over them all
I just can't take care of them all

C.V Raman and Kalpana Chawla
Hargobind Khurana were one of us
They earned high fame and respect
Mother India salutes them all
These were also children of some parents
Who went across seven seas with a purpose
I will endure the pain of old age and all hardships
And keep my worrying mind at bay
After all, one cannot achieve much by sitting at home

LET'S DECIDE NOW!

Humaira Rahat
Translated from Urdu by Abid Ahmad

Let's decide now
How far to go on this road.
I have to part with you
You have to forget me
For many days
I carved your name
On the wet sand
Of the shore
For nothing.
Sometimes
I wrote a message
With tears
On fragrance
Sometimes
In the lonely wilderness
I talked to the walls
Sometimes

Ambling on the roof
I talked even to the moon and the stars.
But this passion of love fetches nothing.
How would it help
To walk together
Like the two banks of a river
Or to burn together
Like the two lamps placed on separate shelves.
Love is where not a single moment comes
Of union and separation
Or
loss and gain.
So
Let there be a conclusion
To this meaningless story.
Let's decide now.

THE FUTURE

Musab Iqbal

Have you seen a green night
a black day
a white evening
a blue intersection of time
a being absorbed by smoke
a life without pain
an insincere wound
an invisible constellation of surprises
a love without thunder
a kiss without touching
a poet without wings
In a night of colorless spring
I will show you how my heart beats
and how I sink each time it breathes
the memory of the future

VULTURE

Parvez Ahmad Naqash

It abhors life
ever on a look out
for death and decay
thrives on it

Its senses sharpen
by the stench
emanating from the carcasses
strewn around

Its appetite
becomes voluptuous
with what it is
fed on.

UNTITLED

Parvez Ahmad Naqash

Snow shall melt
to make way for a rebirth
when the withered
frozen blossoms
bounce back to life.

All the good things sweet things
long to render
the earth, heavens, man's mind
one vastness of fragrance

wherein the agonizing ulcerous wounds
are balmed
the serenity restored.

DREAM

Manoj Sheeri

Last night I saw a strange dream
I saw all my dreams small and big
dry and romantic, sombre and exciting
They all ganged up and engulged me
and forced me to fall flat
I was lying down with shoulders
touching the ground and they
mobbed my body from head to toe
Some sat on my head
Some tethered to my chest
Some pressed heels into my heart
and some got tied to my legs
There was a huge hue and cry
Some dreams were laughing at me
Some were crying and some sobbing
All of them were asking,
How you dared dream us?
I was starring at them and in my

feeble voice saying I have not dreamt consciously
In this din I opened my eyes
and a question was on my lips
How can I dare dream?

Book Review

Aene Aatish
Mohi-ud-Din Reshi
2009
Price: Rs. 250/-
Publisher: Aan Publishers, Srinagar

Ghulam Nabi Aatash

Translated from the Kashmiri by Mohammad Zahid

Kashmiri short story is just some sixty odd years old and taking the case of any genre to get mature enough and bloom this mere period of six odd decades could be visualized as a crawling stage of an infant who is yet to see the grace and grandeur of the youth. However in this short span of time the critical examinations of the serious readers gave this genre the much needed grooming and the genre sprouted. The writers began to experiment with the form, theme, structure and tools of literary usage like similes, metaphors and antithesis began to be widely displayed. Legends, legendary characters were shaped up and fablery began to metamorphose into creative story telling. Soliloquy became the tool for conversation and self-expression. This short spell saw the coming up of some great short story writers who created marvels in this genre. The journey of short story telling moved on with a slow pace, however the journey was a consistent one. The last two decades saw a

meteoric rise in short story telling and new experiments in this genre took place which gave it an altogether new dimension. The new genre proved its mettle and its popularity gained momentum by leaps and bounds. The modern reader with the paucity of time embraced this new genre wholeheartedly. The short stories of late Akhtar Mohiuddin like *"Babli Rou Malyun"* (Babli Lost Her Paternal Home), *"Mouj"* (Mother), *"Reyi"* (Ants), *"Aatankwadi"* (The Terrorist), *"Nau Bemaer"* (New Ailment) and *"Jalli hend Dand"* (The Teeth of Jalli) are the best specimens in this genre and are considered as the beacon lights for the aspiring writers. The last few years saw a good number of writers come to the forefront, telling the shortest of the short stories. One such name that demands attention is that of Mohiuddin Reshi.

The characters employed by a writer do not descend from the skies, instead they are commonplace characters from the society which are woven into fantasy and presented before the society itself. Even if the writer creates characters completely out of sheer fancy they too must bear resemblance to the real life and society where the character is supposed to breathe. The literary works are meant for man and as such can be nurtured by man himself. And staying true to his class, Mohiuddin Reshi picks up the incidents from the society, giving them a concrete shape using his literary prowess and presenting before the readers. His short stories are terse, using a simple language he creates an identity of his own that has become a characteristic of his works. There is no use of rhetoric and neither does he use flamboyant language. The characters that live in his short stories can be met everywhere, in

public offices, lanes and by lanes, market places, our own homes, hospitals, play grounds, lawns, official bungalows etc. In many of the stories there is a triangular configuration where the three main characters as three corners of the triangle interact creating a triangle. The characters stand out at their individual places as the story reaches its climax which has become a characteristic of Mohiddin Reshi's stories. For instance in *"Boche"* (Hunger) Professor Amin, his wife and her pup. Likewise, in *"Brem"* (Illusion) Bashir Saheb, his son, Zubair and his wife Bilqees. In *"Nakh"* (Shouldering) Ghulam Rasool, his wife Fatima and Bihari labourers* also portray the same style of triangular interaction. Brevity is the main characteristic of all these short stories. However there are a few incidents where narration has gone beyond the usual style so much characteristic of Reshi's writings. *"Khwab"* (Dreams) and *"Dah"* (Cremation) are such stories which don't seem to be in consonance with Reshi's established style. It can well be said that story telling becomes an art class apart only if it gets shaped by the pen of masterly craftsmanship of a writer and Mohiuddin Reshi deserves accolades for having mastered this skill and the present collection of short stories holds promises of higher flights of imagination and creativity.

Man has progressed through history by facing the odds and challenges that each passing day brings in with every new dawn. The present modern era with its progress in science and technology, space exploration brings in newer challenges as a cause of conflict with the conventional societal setup which cannot stand in the way of tsunamic waves of technological advancement which

wash away the age old customs and beliefs creating unprecedented social issues. Many of Mohiuddin Reshi's short stories bring this conflict to limelight. The best examples of such short stories are *"Aawlun"* (Vertigo) and *"Ehsaas"* (Realization). While *"Aawlun"* deals with the societal and psychological impact of test tube baby technology, "Ehsaas" deals with AIDS, an equally contemporary issue society is dealing with. In case of *"Aawlun"* the traumas of childless couples is vividly described and how test tube baby technology has come to their rescue. The societal impact of such technology has been brazenly described by the writer. In this story Wajahat and Iram being a young, fair and wealthy couple have not been able to bear a child and opt for the test tube baby technology. However this technology gifts them a dark coloured child whose features did not match them which did not deter the couple to love this child. However with the passage of time as the child started to mingle with the society, the couple had to bear the brunt of his stark non-resemblance which forces Wajahat to take the child along with him and jump into the river and commit suicide. In the short story *"Boche"* Professor Amin's wife is desperate to have a child of her own, and ends up rearing a pup because the professor does not let her adopt a child due to his insensitivity towards the fact of not being able to have a child. The realization dawns upon him one fine day when his student inquires about his children. He gets smitten by this question and rushes to a hospital and brings home a girl child only to discover that his wife had passed away. The pup was howling helplessly by the side of her cold lifeless body. In *"Ehsaas"* Farhan is enjoying his life in America unmindful of the travails his parents had to undergo to raise

him. Sinking deeper into greed and sleaze he realizes that he has become a victim of AIDS when he opens his laptop only to discover that his partner Lucy had confessed before a church father that she was guilty of passing on AIDS acquired by her from Richards to Farhan. The end result of misdeeds is vividly described in this story.

Political, sexual and economic exploitation, bribery, corruption, waywardness, greed and drug addiction has been dealt with exclusively in the short stories of Mohiuddin Reshi. There is a moral message in the stories and the stories are simple without any hyperbole. However there is a strong sarcastic element in the stories that show the society its real face, justifying the title *"Aana Aatash"*. These short stories do not shy away from the ugly blemishes of the society that have seeped in to become an integral part of the society. These stories pull down the shining façade of falsehood from the face of the society and lay it bare. The stories like *"Waqana"* (Excuse), *"Fasla"*(Judgement), *"Fees"* (Fess), *"Tchal"* (Trap} and *"Begmaat"* (Ladies) do not fail to give their readers goose bumps. Mohiuddin Reshi brings out the painful incidents in the society and makes his readers feel that pain with his powerful narrative. These stories lay bare the raw scars of the society before its readers giving them an aftertaste of gall, and moral lessons as well. *"Waqana"* deals with an extraordinary event of shame, which with its unusual theme might look like a work of fancy, however the reader while going through the story realizes that it is a projection of real incidents from the society itself. *Tathyaji's* daughter-in-law Simran has been portrayed having an affair with her bachelor brother-in-law, Bittu. Her parents-in-law are aware

of this development however they turn indifferent towards it to preserve the honour of their family. However, soon after Bittu is married, Simran throws up tantrums. While her parents-in-law admonish her for disturbing the peace and harmony of their family and compromising with the honour of the family to which she sarcastically retorts that if honour was their main concern they should not have married their son at all. *"Tchal"* unveils the corrupt facet of sexual exploitation. A peon named Ramba works as a pimp for his boss and lures young girls on the pretext of getting them jobs. And the wife and daughter of an honest head clerk Rashid have a hair breadth escape from the corrupt clutches of this lecherous boss. *"Begmaat"* deals with a story of a young and talented young girl Shamima being refused a job because the minister's wife, Begum, does not approve of it. Being talented and intelligent, the refusal of the job haunts Shamima who at least gets led to a lunatic asylum. *"Takmil"* (Accomplishment) deals with the issue of growing number of unwed girls crossing the marriageable age, who just keep dreaming of their Prince Charming. The story has a conversation of two girls Maryam and Ghazala who meet after their college days. Maryam who had a kid clinging to her lap asks Ghazala about her marriage. Ghazala sighs and replies that her father is still looking for a rich boy and a gazetted officer. The story climaxes with Ghazala's soliloquy, "Even a woodcutter would do now".

Old age issues have been touched in two powerful stories. How the old people gradually start to become a liability on younger generations is the central theme of these stories. The short story *"Brem"* does not fail to drive the reader into a lachrymose state. The son and

daughter-in-law of *Bashir Saeb* show him the door on the pretext to dispatch him to his younger son who is abroad, however he is abandoned at a railway station and finds himself in an old age home as he opens his eyes after losing his consciousness. Similarly *"Waqh"* (Time) which has been presented as a telephonic conversation between two old men, depicts how common their issues are. Their own progeny whom they loved like anything, for whom they faced all odds to groom they have turned their backs and consider them a mote in their eye and don't even feel ashamed to call them mentally retarded to confine them in isolation in their own homes where each member wishes to see them dead. However the length of this story raises questions regarding its classification as a short story and if it is to be counted as a short story, it could then well be an innovative experimentation in this genre.

The short story *"Nakh"* is one of the finest specimens of Mohiuddin Reshi's work and deserves due praise. A mere incident has been efficiently woven into a short story raising some genuine questions regarding certain contemporary issues. *Mama Saeb* passed away at his house when all alone one day while his sons were settled in England. The neighbours summoned some Bihari labourers to shoulder his coffin to the graveyard. While carrying his coffin one of the labourers chants Ram Naam Satya Hai while the other one nudges him telling him that the deceased was a Muslim. Ghulam Rasool who is a witness to all this comes home heartbroken and tells his wife that they should send their boys to learn some trade now. In his opinion they had studied enough. If they studied too much and go abroad who would shoulder their dead bodies. This

story raises the sensitive issue that is so much becoming common each passing day. It also raises an important issue where Kashmiri locals are turning indolent.

Each short story in this collection has its own charm. The readers get an impression that whatever the writer tries to present is already known to them. Mohiuddin Reshi's short stories prod the reader to look around and feel what is happening in the environs surrounding them.

* Bihari labourers is a general term used in Kashmir for all non local labourers

Printed By
R.M OFFSET ART PRESS
Cell:- 09796994269-09717903884